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Official Magazine - Australia

ISSUE 60 OCTOBER 2011
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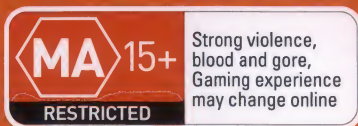


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► FIELD OF SCREAMS

Battlefield 3 50

OPS deploys across the international date line in order to engage what could well be the free world's last hope of a *Call of Duty* killer. Join us as we carpe some diem and ascertain if this really is worth debriefing over.



68 Driver: San Francisco

The most fun you'll ever have in a coma. Or, at least, we think so. None of us have been in one before.



36 Dead Island

We book a ticket to the island and kick back in this gore-lovers paradise. Join us as we test out our zombie escape plans.

► ON THE COVER

12 Tim Cahill Interview

On the pitch or off, you're going downtown, son.

58 Mobile vs. Console

Are consoles really going the way of the dodo?

68 Driver: San Francisco

Top gear, or stall? Read our final verdict on this chase-fest.

74 Deus Ex: Human Revolution

The brainiest blaster around?

78 Bodycount

2011 is not a good year to release a turkey of a shooter...



58 Mobile vs. Console

Is the rise of mobile gaming really a threat to the triple A games we love, or is all this talk just a bunch of hot air?

**16 In Reality**

Power armour is our most favourite of all armours. But how likely are we of owning some?

**30 Angry Sackboy**

Sackboy hates the people who hate gaming. In this case: a bunch of right-wing fearmongers.



PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

Contents

► INSIDER**In Short**

All the essential news nuggets delivered as one tasty column.

In Reality

We see how likely it is to score some sweet power armour.

In Focus

A closer look at the best upcoming PS3 games.

Top 10

Most memorable spiders. Like you were ever going to forget them.

Insane

We have some fun at somebody else's expense.

Around the World

Gaming news and events from the far reaches of the globe.

Calendar

A month and a bit of essential activities and releases.

Release Schedule

An up-to-date list of all upcoming and recently-released PS3 titles.

Opinion: Angry Sackboy

Sack packs a punch. Ask the ACL. If they're still conscious.

Inbox

Your thoughts, letters, and feedback from the web and email.

► REGULAR**Internet**

News, online reviews and DLC roundup.

Insight

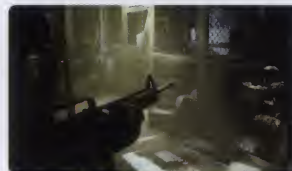
In-depth tips on how to take your game to the next level.

Intermission

DVD, Blu-ray, PlayStation Store and cinema reviews.

Index

Your essential guide to the very best – and worst – games out there.

► FEATURES**Battlefield 3**

We go hands-on with EA and DICE's very heavy artillery.

Mobile vs. Console

Our take on the state of the so-called smart phone menace.

► PREVIEWS**Dead Island**

36

GoldenEye 007: Reloaded

40

**Aliens: Colonial Marines**

42

**Darksiders II**

44

Saints Row: The Third

46

Dishonored

48

Need for Speed The Run

49

Journey

49

Star Trek

49

FIFA 12

49

Far Cry 3

49

F1 2011

49

The Adventures of TinTin: The Game

49

► REVIEWS**Driver: San Francisco**

68

Deus Ex: Human Revolution

74

Bodycount

78

Call of Juarez: The Cartel

80

**Air Conflicts: Secret Wars**

82

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See page 34 for details ►

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Meet the team

**Paul Taylor****Deputy Editor**

Bye Reilly! Does this mean I get to sit in the big boy's chair, and get a new photo?

Playing: *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*

Wanting: *Dishonored*

**Stephanie Goh****Art Director**

Bye Luke! Here's hoping the new guy is half as awesome (and likes chocolate).

Playing: *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*

Wanting: *AC: Revelations*

**Adam Mathew****Associate Editor**

End (and start) of an era. You have been, and always shall be, *OPS* editor and my friend. *Vulcan salute*.

Playing: *Driver: SF*

Wanting: *Mass Effect 3*

**James Cottee****Contributor**

I think Bethesda's lawyers need to lay off Notch and take a Chill Pill.

Playing: *Portal 2*

Wanting: *Batman: Arkham City*

**James Ellis****Contributor**

I've been composing my Ode to Lucozade and several related Haikus. Bye big fella!

Playing: *FIFA 12*

Wanting: *Skyrim*

**Nathan Lawrence****Contributor**

Reinforcing the sacred mantra, 'A headshot a day keeps the n00bs away'. Also, I'm in Germany.

Playing: *Battlefield 3*

Wanting: *Uncharted 3*

**Dave Kozicki****Contributor**

What am I up to? *Battlefield 3* multiplayer. I want to have sex with you. I'll even snuggle afterwards I swear!

Playing: *Driver: SF*

Wanting: *The Baioning*

**Toby McCasker****Contributor**

Luke's leaving and I'm a bit sad about it. It's like the end of *Final Fantasy X* where Tidus disappears. "Sniff"

Playing: *Xena: WP*

Wanting: Luke back

**Angry Sackboy****Contributor**

Luke Reilly? Sure, I think I knew him once. Heard he died in a grease fire, or something. Yeah. *That guy*.

Playing: *CoJ: The Cartel*

Wanting: *Reparations*

Editorial



When I was a teenager, instead of studying, I played a lot of *Driver*. I played it so much

I'm pretty sure I killed our family's TV. It was one of those old ones; it had wood panelling and I think the remote control was powered by mice. Also you had to tune the PlayStation into it, like a VCR. Remember that? Scanning for those two white lines. I hated that.

I'm pretty sure I saw the Berlin Wall come down on this TV so it was probably

on the way out anyway. My *Driver* sessions proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

Oddly enough, well over a decade later, while playing the *Driver: San Francisco* a crucial piece of electronics crapped out on me again. In this case it wasn't my TV, rather our PS3 test console. As you'd expect our test consoles get *punished*. After four years of being on more than it was off, plus countless train rides and courier trips, it's hardly surprising. It's hardly tragic either; a PS3 – debug or otherwise – is just a machine and machines can be repaired. I did have to start the game from scratch though, on another debug. The universe is kooky sometimes.

This brings me to my next point, as I myself will be starting from scratch again elsewhere. After around 90 issues of *OPS2* and *OPS*, going from freelancer to editor, it's time for me to punch out for a new opportunity. As my first job that didn't require me to wear a name tag this magazine will *always* be special to me.

When I was popping into the newsagency each month back in the late '90s and early 2000s I certainly never would've guessed that I'd one day be the editor of my favourite magazine. It's been an incredible ride and I've had an incredible bunch of people to work with. Of course, I owe it all to you, the readers. If you weren't buying and enjoying the magazine I'd have been back stacking DVDs or digging holes years ago. Thanks for all your support. I'll be one of you again, starting next month. Maybe I'll start sending letters to the new editor.

I'll end with a confession. That signature, below? It's my fake magazine signature. My real one looks like the kind of mark you make on a page when you want to test if a pen is working. I'm glad I got that off my chest.

Luke Reilly**Editor**

Playing: *Driver: San Francisco*

Wanting: *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*

SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole year round? Love? Wrong. A scratch-and-sniff calendar of celebrity crotchets? No. Please stop abusing our rhetorical system.

The answer we were looking for is an *OPS* subscription! Think about it, every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via magic.

TURN TO PAGE 34

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(11)

This Month

12 Interview
Tim Cahill

14 News
Next next gen

16 In Reality
Power armour

17 In Focus
Batman: Arkham City

18 Interview
Boba Fett speaks

19 In Focus
WWE '12

20 Top Ten
Giant spiders

21 Insane
Gaming satire

22 Around the World
Global gaming snippets

23 Calendar
This month and beyond

24 Release schedule
The big list

25 In Their Words
Quotes from the industry

26 Opinion
Paul Taylor

28 Opinion
Adam Mathew

30 Opinion
Angry Sackboy

Two steps forward, two steps back

Our games industry rises to the challenge and gets itself "right-sized"

Recently, the Australian games industry made two momentous leaps forward. The first was the in-principle agreement for an R18+ rating, the second was improved R&D tax credit legislation for small-to-medium businesses.

Regarding the former, while NSW Attorney-General Greg Smith abstained from voting on an R18+ rating for videogames during the SCAG meeting in July (where all the remaining Attorneys-General finally agreed in-principle to the rating), Smith has since formally stated that he too will give his in-principle support to an R18+ rating for games in Australia. The next step for all the Attorneys-General is to work on the revised guidelines discussed at the SCAG meeting.

According to those who lobbied hard for the latter, this \$1.8 billion research and development tax break would have the potential to turn Australia into a booming mecca of game development.

"News of the tax reform has already attracted the interest of many global game publishers," Ron Curry, CEO of the Interactive Games and

Entertainment Association (IGEA) told us, soon after the reform was passed. "Globally there's a lot of competition, particularly with places like Canada, where its government is working to support its gaming industry. So it's nice to have the chance to bring opportunities to Australia."

While there's little doubt that the R&D Tax Credit was quite the coup, the local enthusiasm for the legislation wasn't enough to impress multinational videogame publisher THQ. Unfortunately the publisher has decided to cull two of its development studios in Australia: Blue Tongue Entertainment in Melbourne and THQ Studio Australia in Brisbane.

Both teams were associated with popular franchises — with Blue Tongue having developed the *de Blob* series and the Brisbane studio handling the *Avatar: The Last Airbender* IP.

Blue Tongue opened its doors way back in 1995 — publishing *AFL Finals Fever* — and caught THQ's eye for a November 2004 acquisition. The THQ Brisbane studio had been formed one year earlier and had a long history in developing games based

around Nickelodeon franchises.

"By right-sizing our internal development capacities for our console portfolio, our five internal studios are focused on delivering high-quality games with talented teams driving the execution of those titles to market," said Brian Farrell, President and CEO, THQ in a globally issued statement. "As we have outlined in our business strategies, we are making shifts to reduce movie-based and licensed kids' video games in our portfolio, which underscores our strategy to move away from games that will not generate strong profits in the future."

This sad news comes off the back of a rumour suggesting that beleaguered Aussie developer, Team Bondi, will be closing its doors. According to an inside source, the studio will be selling off its IP and other assets in a plan to be absorbed by George Miller's Sydney-based production studio, Kennedy Miller Mitchell (KMM). According to the same source, the remaining staff members at Team Bondi have been offered jobs at KMM. KMM is thought to be working on the rumoured *Mad Max* game.

In Short

A brief look at this month's news



- ▶ The next title from developer Goichi "Suda51" Suda's Grasshopper Manufacture is called **Lollipop Chainsaw**. It's about a cheerleader named Juliet who just so happens to be a zombie slayer armed with a chainsaw.
- ▶ **PS3 price drop** confirmed for Australia: \$349.95RRP for the 160GB and \$449.95RRP for the 320GB, effective now.
- ▶ A new **Batman: Arkham City** trailer has unveiled Mr. Freeze.
- ▶ According to WB Interactive President Martin Tremblay, **Mortal Kombat** has already paid for all of the assets acquired from Midway by selling "close to" three million units worldwide. How many of those were smuggled into Australia? More than a few, we imagine.
- ▶ **Ridge Racer Unbounded** will introduce a "City Creator" feature, allowing players to lay out their own environments.
- ▶ Tommy, from the original *Prey*, will play an "integral" role in *Prey 2*'s plot.
- ▶ THQ has decided "not to actively pursue further development" of the once-decent **MX vs ATV** franchise.
- ▶ Take-Two CEO Strauss Zelnick has told investors that, despite its disappointing reviews, **Duke Nukem Forever** has been profitable for the company.
- ▶ Sony will release **SingStar Back to the 80s** before Christmas.
- ▶ **Battlefield 3** will have 10 times the unlocks as *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*.
- ▶ **Borderlands 2** has been announced.
- ▶ Adam Levine, lead singer of Maroon 5, is suing Activision for inappropriate use of his likeness in 2009's **Band Hero**. Levine claims he didn't give Activision permission to use his likeness with other songs. Activision lost a similar case to No Doubt in 2010.
- ▶ **Batman: Arkham City**'s new London gangster Penguin is reportedly actually voiced by Nolan 'Nathan Drake' North. Crazy.
- ▶ **Twisted Metal** has been delayed until early 2012 worldwide.
- ▶ UK-based publisher Reef Entertainment has acquired the rights to **Rambo** and plans to produce "triple-A" Rambo games for PS3 and other platforms.
- ▶ 2K Games has confirmed that the likes of Julius Erving (Dr. J) and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar will be appearing alongside Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson and Larry Bird in **NBA 2K12**. These Hall of Famers will feature in a new "NBA's Greatest" mode (similar to last year's Jordan Challenge), where players can relive classic moments using 15 classic NBA teams.
- ▶ In welcome news Square Enix has picked up **True Crime: Hong Kong** from Activision, so we WILL actually get to play it.
- ▶ Sony has acquired *InFamous* developer, adding **Sucker Punch Productions** to its impressive list of first party studios.
- ▶ **Call of Duty: Black Ops** has sold 25 million copies. *Modern Warfare 2* has sold 22 million.
- ▶ Put down the magazine right now and type "The Ballad of Mike Haggar" into YouTube. Don't think; just do it.

▶ INTERVIEW

Cahill's FIFA Fever

After being offered another year as one of *FIFA*'s football pin ups, *OPS* chats to the man with the world's most expensive forehead, **Tim Cahill**, about his obsession with EA's take on the world game

OPS: What made you say yes to being EA's FIFA ambassador in Australia?

Tim Cahill: It's simple mate. *FIFA* is part of a footballer's life. This is what we do in our spare time. It's what I do with my children. When I was asked a couple of years back it was a massive honour and privilege. You inspire kids with the game. Everyone plays it. I love it. My children and I play all the time, my brothers and friends. You become competitive.

OPS: Do you think, given the game's increasing attention to detail each year, that being a player of the real game gives you an edge?

TC: Yeah, it gives you a lot of knowledge. My kids now know that when they play 3-5-2 it's very attacking, and if they're winning they drop to 4-4-2. They make subs when players get tired. It's amazing what you can learn and also it's the closest you can get to actually playing. I suppose for knowledge it's the closest kids can get. That's why we love it.

OPS: With the FIFA games getting so accurate, not just in terms of gameplay but also strategy and culture, do you see that having any kind of effect on how the sport as a whole is received in Australia?

TC: Most definitely. I think for kids, if it's raining outside they're inside playing *FIFA*. And if it's not they're outside kicking the ball around. But to play as your heroes and move different players around the pitch, play yourself in goal, it gives a different edge to it.

OPS: What are your thoughts on how you've been replicated in the game?

TC: I'm very happy. To be one of the best headers of the ball in the game is massive for me, and just being in the game, being on the front cover the last couple of years, and being involved with some of the biggest players and biggest campaigns, it's something for me as an

Australian. The kids seeing me with Wayne Rooney and players like that – it helps inspire them too because they can relate to another Aussie.


OPS: Obviously you're a competitive person; do you get emotionally invested and caught up in the game? Get riled up?

TC: Yeah, I do. One thing that really gets on my nerves is when someone makes 10 subs, changes their team, swaps their formation. I like the game to flow. When they play five fullbacks instead of coming out and having a go, or when they just pass it around in the corner so you can't score. So yeah you get emotional but it's part of the game, it's part of being competitive and it's part of winning and losing.

TC: We think the entire FIFA community would love to see an 11-on-11 game between two clubs, or even international teams – what do you think?

TC: But the thing is we couldn't play 11-on-11 because we wouldn't pass the ball. Everyone would just try to hog it and score. We'd have 10 forwards. Nah, but I have a massive *FIFA* night on Monday with Brett Lee and his cousin and my brothers and cousins. It's a massive round robin and there's a lot at stake because it's all about the pride of winning. There's a trophy – the lot.

OPS: Who's the best pro footballer you've played in FIFA?

TC: Benzema was pretty good. Joleon Lescott is not bad. I had a quick game against Kaka. He was okay as well. In Barcelona I played against the world champion – he was Spanish – and he only beat me 1-0. I was pretty happy with that. 



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IN-DEPTH

Australianext-gen?

How a relatively unknown Aussie technology company hopes to revolutionise video game graphics, 100,000 times over

Come gather 'round and listen well to the tale of Euclidean, an Australian company that claims it can increase the fidelity of videogame graphics. *By a factor of 100,000.*

The new technology, called 'Unlimited Detail', was recently showcased in a remarkable YouTube video released by the Brisbane-based technology company. Initially the video shows an expansive one-kilometre-square world filled with trees, rock and ruined ancient buildings, and then it zooms in to reveal a ground made up of individual bits of dirt. Euclidean claims the environment is comprised of 21,062,352,435,000 atoms and, even in its early state, is running at a steady 20 frames a second.

Needless to say, Euclidean's reveal of Unlimited Detail was met with some very mixed reactions from the internet, some cautiously optimistic, others scathingly skeptical.

Coding genius and visionary developer John Carmack was the first to confirm the future viability of such tech, by tweeting "Re: Euclidean, no chance of a game on current gen systems, but maybe several years from now. Production issues will be challenging." Carmack's view was not shared by all of his contemporaries, however.

"They're hyping this as something new and revolutionary because they want funding," wrote Markus 'Notch' Persson, the creator of *Minecraft*, who openly called Euclidean "Snake Oil Salesmen" running a "scam".

But if it is a scam, it's an elaborate one. The government has already invested \$2 million into Euclidean and its technology.

But how does it all work?

"Well, basically anyone who is technical is going to say you can't run that many polygons," explained Bruce Dell, Euclidean CEO while speaking to Kotaku AU. "A good analogy would be this: imagine you go to a library to find a book – say... *Snow White*. You go to a library and those books aren't on the shelf; they're all lying on the ground. At the moment systems that run point cloud data are doing that, they're putting every point on the screen and there is no order to it. Now imagine you go to a library and all the books are on the shelf and in order – you go to the 'S' Section, then look for 'SNO' and it isn't long before you've found the book you need.

"One system is looking at thousands of books," he continues, "and the other system is looking at 10 labels. That's the basis of a search

algorithm like Google or Yahoo – they sort through all the knowledge in the world really quickly because it's categorised.

"We made a search algorithm, but it's a search algorithm that finds points, it can grab just one atom for every point on the screen."

Explained in those terms, Unlimited Detail makes perfect sense in terms of efficiency. What remains to be seen though – and what is a major sticking point for non-believers – is if the tech is animation and physics friendly.

With Euclidean stating its intent to take its development underground for another year, the answer to that question (and real-time proof of it working) might be a long time in the making.

Grant: granted

The government grant afforded to Euclidean will support the programmers to convert the system from PC to game consoles, mobile phones and other platforms. This potentially ground-breaking advance in 3D technology will have other applications too, such as architecture, mining, the sciences and many other industries.

The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Kim Carr said "I am pleased to help talented researchers and entrepreneurs capitalise on their good ideas. I look forward to seeing their inventions make a difference to the lives of Australians."

OPS VAULT OCTOBER

2002 ▶

This is going back. Flicking through this issue we can spot previews for *The Thing* and *TimeSplitters 2*, plus first looks at *True Crime: Streets of LA* and *Red Dead Revolver* (when it was still a Capcom game). We also exposed *Far Cry* under the impression it was set to appear on PS2 shortly after the PC (which didn't happen). We also jetted to Miami for a first look at *GTA: Vice City* and reviewed *Red Faction 2*, *Tekken 4* and... *Klonoa Beach Volleyball*. Remember Klonoa? He was a cat, possibly. He was a cat-like thing. Or a dog, we're not too sure. He's gone now, at any rate.



2004 ▶

This issue had two collector covers, a blue Ford one and a red Holden one. We can't find the Holden one anywhere in the office so, if you've still got one, you're one up on us. Our October 2004 issue featured the first review of the excellent *V8 Supercars 2*, and our first 10 out of 10 racer in *Burnout 3: Takedown*, but it also contained a massive in-depth exposé on *GTA: San Andreas* (complete with a massive haul of screenshots we were probably all wetting our pants over). Coincidentally enough this issue also contains a massive *Driv3r* guide, Tanner's last game before *Driver: San Francisco*.



2010 ▶

12 months ago we sent Nathan overseas for an exclusive first look at how the multiplayer in *Call of Duty: Black Ops* was shaping up. A year later and he's doing the same thing for *Battlefield 3*.

Cat loves first-person shooters. Also in this issue we reviewed *Mafia II* ("Great, but not as great as it could've been") *H.A.W.X. 2* ("If you strap in, there are Gs to feel") and even some PSP games (which developers were apparently still making 12 months ago). We also thought up the manliest game they'll make: *The Unfragables*.





MAJOR PARTNERS

Supanova

MAD

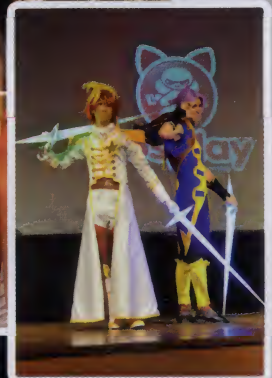
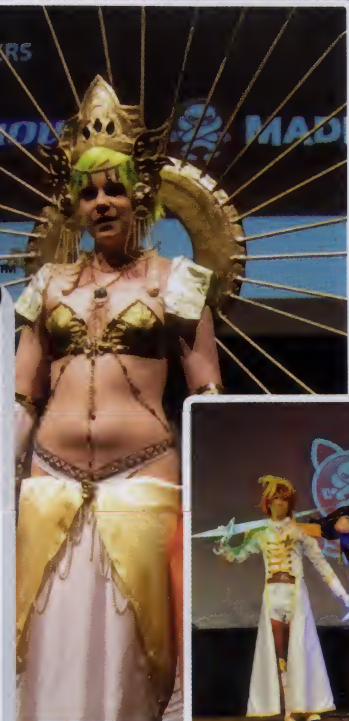


Anime / Manga

Castlevania Judge
The Game

Cosplay, short for "costume play", is a type of performance art where people don costumes and accessories to represent a specific character. The characters are more often than not drawn from popular anime and manga from Japan – but cosplay isn't necessarily limited to those and can include American cartoons, sci-fi, comic books, graphic novels, fantasy movies and videogames.

Australia's finest cosplayers are going head to head in the Madman National Cosplay Championship. The winner of each of the five rounds held across the country until July will progress to the Grand Final in Brisbane on November 5. The prize is a trip to Japan, the home of cosplay!



Adelaide

The Adelaide round of the Madman National Cosplay Championship was held at AVCON – Adelaide's annual anime and videogame convention – from July 22-24. With seven contestants it was one of the biggest rounds of the year. Being the final chance for anyone to qualify for the finals made things tough for this field. The eventual winners were Olivia Caputi (as Astharoshe Asran "Asta" from *Trinity Blood*) in first place, Desert Rose (Sanzang from *Dynasty Warriors Strikeforce II*) in second place and Usagi Hime (as Aeon from *Castlevania Judgement*) in third place.



Wildcards

With all of the rounds finished Madman can also now reveal the wildcard entries for the finals. They include:

- Wildcard 1 – Desert Rose (Adelaide)
- Wildcard 2 – Endless Blaze (Brisbane)
- Wildcard 3 – Twinklee and Velithya (Perth)

This will mean that there are now eight contestants and teams for the final event at Supanova Expo Brisbane on November 5. The event will be broadcast live online at www.madman.com.au/cosplay and there'll be plenty of behind the scenes stuff going on as well!



madman.com.au/cosplay

► IN REALITY

Exoskeletons – when can we have one?

As seen in: *Crysis*, *Warhammer 40K*, *Space Marine*

From *Aliens* to *Crysis* and a whole bunch of science-fiction based novels, films, games and art in between, the idea of a powered suit worn by a person for extra strength, and/or even as a layer of lightweight but ultra dense armour, has actually been on the minds of scientists and military boffins for a while. In fact, a bunch of prototypes have already been made, with a couple worthy of serious attention.

One of the first serious attempts began way back in the 1960s as General Electric made their own suit – take the power lifter from *Aliens*, but redesign it in the image of The Robot in the TV show *Lost in Space* and you're most of the way there. The project was funded by the US military, and its intent was impressive. Once strapped in the operator could lift over 680kg, as the motors in the 'suit' aids his own movements; one of the applications for it was loading bombs into navy warplanes. While the idea was great in theory, the unit itself also weighed 680kg, wasn't particularly stable and was also skittled by power supply problems.

Back in 2001, the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) had plans to make an exoskeleton that would be powered by a bunch of tiny internal combustion engines fitted to individual joints. DARPA then secured US\$50 to fund a project known as "Exoskeletons for Human Performance Augmentation". 14 companies and universities presented different designs, but Sarcos of Salt Lake City in Utah, US, won the contract.

► More info

So you've got your mega limbs, but what about some super armour? Bulk is out, sleekness is in, and carbon nanotubes are just one solution. This cylindrical material is a scant few nanometers thick, yet is 50 times stronger than steel. Some nanotubes were found in Damascus steel from the 17th Century - possibly accounting for the legendary strength of the material. It's lightweight, yet a 1mm thick strand can carry a weight of 6400kg, and an armour plate just 0.6mm thick would be enough to stop a bullet from penetrating the material.



Ants have exoskeletons and ants outnumber humans over a million to one. Can you handle a million ants?

Since then, Sarcos made an impressive model which led to them being bought out by Raytheon, and in 2008 the company's first 'proof on concept' appeared, the XOS 1. Braces ran around the wearer's outer legs and arms, essentially making them look a bit like a robotic Goro. Still, using a single engine that powered a stack of actuators, sensors and controllers, it allowed the wearer to lift a 68kg weight hundreds of times over without tiring. Roughly a year ago the XOS 2 was revealed, with much sleeker framework that used less fuel and yet gave greater strength (up to 91kg from 68kg). However, a cord tethers it to the power supply: hardly ideal unless you want a tanker following you around pumping petrol into your mechanical joints.

There may be a solution. The University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkley) also developed its BLEEX (Berkeley Lower Extremity Exoskeleton) that was then picked up by Berkeley Bionics, and then Lockheed Martin (LM). Their HULC system does similar things to the XOS 2, but LM is trying to implement a fuel cell to power it, meaning the unit would be able to run for dozens of hours at a time without being tethered to an additional power source – perfect for ongoing, ground-based missions.

On a civilian scale, however, Berkeley Bionics has made eLEGS, a wearable set of limbs that allows wheelchair-bound people to get up and walk around.

And that is truly amazing.

► NUMBER CRUNCHING

100,000

▲ The amount of players that can simultaneously participate in an event in EA's upcoming *SSX*

2

▲ The number of days two 'protestors' sat on the lawn opposite Valve, demanding to know when *Half-Life 2: Episode Three* will be released

Separated at Birth!

NO. 30 Adam Jensen and the Irish brogue Colin Farrell



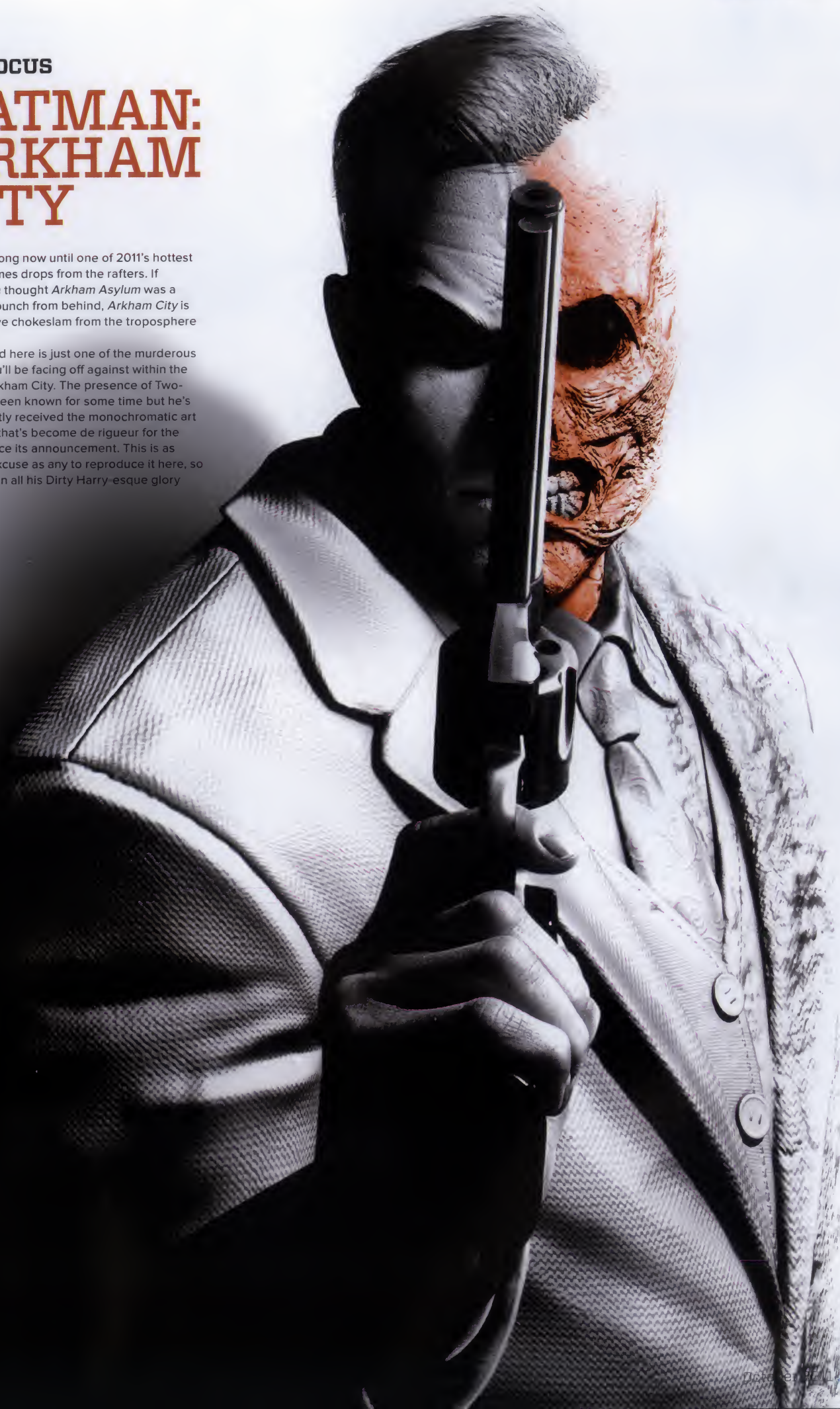
One of these men could knock you out without you even knowing he was there. And the other is Adam Jensen. Farrell's been in his fair share of action extravaganzas, and he'd totally nail a dry, husky, nowhere-in-particular accent. The two of them are about the same age, too, and Farrell has no problems with growing a wicked, pointy goatee. Plus, a *Deus Ex* movie is actually a fantastic idea – maybe cast the prickly Pritchard as Steve Buscemi in one of his 'straight' roles and you have an augmented winner.

► INFOCUS

BATMAN:
ARKHAM
CITY

Not long now until one of 2011's hottest games drops from the rafters. If you thought *Arkham Asylum* was a knockout punch from behind, *Arkham City* is a powerdive chokeslam from the troposphere – trust us.

Pictured here is just one of the murderous rogues you'll be facing off against within the walls of Arkham City. The presence of Two-Face has been known for some time but he's only recently received the monochromatic art treatment that's become de rigueur for the project since its announcement. This is as good an excuse as any to reproduce it here, so here he is in all his Dirty Harry-esque glory



SO YOU WANT TO BE A ... DRIFTER

OPTION 1

No, this isn't about slinging a red-and-white spotty cloth on a stick and hiking across the country, relying on the kindness of strangers and picking cheese from pizza boxes for breakfast. We're talking about tyre smoke, and license-revoking, sideways action in a fanging automobile.

"Mad" Mike Whiddett, part of *Need for Speed's* Speedhunters team, makes it sound attractive. All you need is a set of wheels, a track and a sense of how to entertain a crowd. As long as your car is rear wheel drive, it'll drift.

"It's about defining yourself," says Whiddett, "Creating this character, the car that you can put your personality in and the livery. I think separating yourself and making yourself different – that's what makes drifting so cool."

Like surfing, your performance is measured on a few different parameters. You need to keep in mind your line around the corner, your speed and your angle relative to the corner. For Whiddett, he says "my team and I are always trying to evolve the car beyond the limit, and we have [tuned our Mazda RX-7] so far now that we can swing us well beyond its steering arc, sliding out backwards and still driving on."

Like other professional, international motorsports, having a team of mechanics and engineers is essential to fix up any mistakes you've made and get the car back on the track as soon as possible.

Of course, this means either having very deep pockets or being sponsored.

"Last year in the USA we spent US\$130,000 US just on the running costs," says Whiddett. "My fiancé manages the team and the budget, and we had to purchase a pickup truck and a trailer that we could live in. Then there's transport for the cars so we would drive to every round – that's on top of the budget, let alone the cars. And they cost roughly \$150,000. Formula drift is the F1 of drift, and any professional motor sport is expensive."

TIME:

There isn't a set time frame on going from a weekend track warrior to a full-blown, globe-trotting Formula D superstar. You need to get as much time on the track as possible, getting to know the layout and your car, and how to set it up according to the different types of surfaces. Whiddett seems to possess a natural talent, having started at 26. He's now 30.

OPTION 2

Turn on *SHIFT 2: Unleashed*

TIME:

Five minutes



► INTERVIEW

Shooter revival

Jeremy Bulloch, the man (but not the voice) behind Boba Fett's mask, talks to us about *Star Wars* on Blu-ray

OPS: How does it feel to be a living legend? And why do you think people love this character so much after all this time?

JB: The fan response is extraordinary and still amazes me. There's something about the character, you know? The costume is strong and when you look at it you think, "Oh my goodness, he is dangerous". Boba doesn't really need to do too much beyond standing there with a menacing look. There is a mystery to him that people still want to find out about.

OPS: Is it difficult keeping up with the fan mail?

JB: It is. I always go through mail on weekends if I'm not away and sometimes it takes the whole of Sunday starting at 8am just to clear it all out. Unfortunately some people don't put in return postage so that falls to the bottom of the pile.

OPS: Have you had any wacky stalkers over the years? Do you at least have any Aussie fans with a Boba fetish?

JB: (laughs) No, there are no stalkers, they usually just say, "Hi Jeremy, nice to see you". Funnily enough I was going to be down in Hobart sometime in June, but unfortunately it didn't work out. But hopefully I will be in Australia again soon.

OPS: How does it feel in your Mandalorian armour? Can you see out of it? Does it ride up in the crotch?

JB: It is actually quite easy to see out of. I have a replica costume which was given to me by the dented helmet group that makes all of the outfits. And a couple of times I've worn it and, it's quite funny, because you immediately start to think "I'm Boba Fett." So again you said in the very first question what's it like to be a living legend? I don't see it like that, except that it was just a very fortunate part that came along while I was in the theater at the same time. Not a day goes by without someone saying, "Hey, you're Boba Fett". Occasionally when I get cross with my grandchildren I say, "Remember, Boba Fett is talking to you, now go to bed now". Sometimes it works.

OPS: Do the fans at conventions know quite a lot more than you?

JB: You're absolutely right. They know more than me and I try to expect things but then they'll say, "In this scene why didn't you shoot your customized EE-3 carbine, like you did

in the other scene?" When that happens I tell them that it's classified information. And that gets me out of it.

OPS: What did you think of Lucas' Boba Fett changes? How did the Kiwi voice suit you?

JB: I can understand why they did it, because now we know he is a natural clone. But there is still that thing that you should never know what he looks like. I understand why we were made to know more about Boba Fett. But his [adult] voice really should [and could] have remained as it was.

OPS: The Blu-ray sets feature outtakes. Did you make the list?

JB: I'm sure there will be something. But I don't think they'll put in the one where I accidentally say, "Put captain cargo in the Solo hold". I got it all mixed up but no one could understand what I was saying anyway so it didn't matter. I'm keen to see the outtakes on the Blu-rays.

OPS: What is your most treasured piece in your 'Fett museum'?

JB: Well I've got a few statues. A lot of people give me a lot of different little bits

"Well I've got a few statues... My grandkids love sitting [in my office] pretending they're in Slave 1"

and pieces. And I bought several pieces, so whenever I'm in my office I'm surrounded by Boba Fetts. Some people might say I'm a sad person to have collected all of this stuff. But my grandkids love sitting in there pretending they're in Slave 1.

OPS: Is it true that you went into Return of the Jedi not knowing that Boba Fett was going to "die" in... well, Tatooine's sand vagina?

JB: The Sarlacc pit was a complete surprise, I didn't get a script. From day to day and then I was called onto the set and then the pit guys falling in there were all stuntmen. A few of those guys got injured doing that stunt, too. Frankly, the Sarlacc scene made the character more popular by getting rid of him. It was a huge experience and I can't wait to see how it looks on the Blu-ray.

OPS: Recently Captain America director Joe Johnson sent an open letter to Lucas asking to do a Boba Fett feature film. Keen for a comeback?

JB: I've heard about Joe Johnson and I would definitely say "look Joe, it would be nice to have a cameo role". That would be really nice; an aging bounty hunter sitting down in the background having a couple of drinks. So who knows? It could happen. 🍷



► INFOCUS

WWE '12

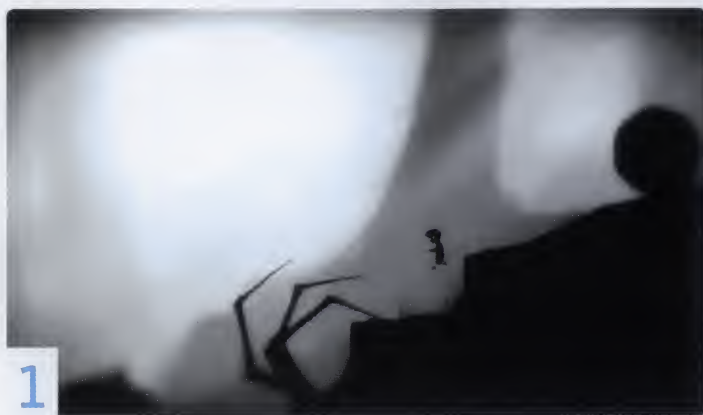
This year's grappler from THQ is set to represent the biggest leap for the WWE franchise this generation. Fans will finally receive the new engine they've been demanding for years, an engine which reportedly delivers little to no morphing, smoother animations and the ability to cancel moves.

THQ has announced "the most electrifying man in all of entertainment," legendary WWE Superstar The Rock, will be available as a playable character for gamers who pre-order *WWE '12* at any participating retailer within Australia and New Zealand (while supplies last). The Rock's in-game character will resemble his current-day appearance, including a shaved head and present tattoos.

► TOP TEN

Memorable Spiders

Humans, at their most basic level, are hard-wired to view spiders as creatures of note. Some take note of them much more than others. According to Wikipedia, “50 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men” choose to take note by “shrieking at a frequency high enough to make dogs explode” [citation needed]. Unfortunately, videogames offer zero respite to such people. And here’s why...



1

Limbo

When are spider legs not spider legs? When they’re the harmless branches of a tree. So when are the harmless branches of a tree n... GAH! Get it of me! Get it o-- [and there goes our head]. You win round #83, *Limbo*. This spider is the favourite because it’s the most satisfying to squish. Who would’ve thunk a small boy damned to hell could have killed this beast with nothing more than Indiana ingenuity?



2

Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance

This series was an arachnophobics wettest nightmare. Your quests started you out killing large-ish spiders, but soon escalated to mammoth spiders, and then abominable ice spiders that froze and poisoned (or ‘froisoned’) you to death. It got worse though. You also got stalked by “driders”; hybrids of dark elves and giant spiders. Marvellous.



4

Castlevania: LoS

For a franchise that fixates on vampires harder than the bubbleheaded *Twilight* crowd, Konami sure pelted us with a lot of werewolves and gigantic spiders. But for all their bitey irritation, these eight-legged beasts made for some bad-arse transportation. Lasso one of these guys and love life (by killing) as a spider-rider.



3

Resident Evil series

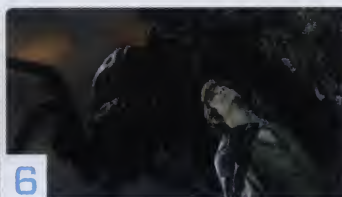
The thing that annoyed us most about Capcom’s angry arachnids were their snooty dining habits. With a zombie apocalypse on they had wall-to-wall, pre-slaughtered shambling meat on the menu. But noooo, they wanted their human steak ‘super rare’ (with a side-order of shotgun shells). Finicky idiots.



5

Brütal Legend

We probably could have asked nicely for the giant bass strings she spun, but she didn’t seem like the negotiating type. And so, out of personal respect, we got straight to the arse-kicking. She made our list because of her fantastic character design. It’s pretty hard to hate a blade-based spider with fully-sick exhaust pipes.



6

LOTR: Return of the King

By and large, we thought Samwise Gamgee was a bit of a weiner. But our respect levels for him rose in this PS2 slash ‘em up when he manned-up to take on Shelob (the mother of all giant fantasy spiders). Unlike the movie, EA had him trash-talking the beast during and after the fight. Respect.



7

Borderlands

Weighing in at roughly four times larger than your average spiderant, Queen Tarantella truly is the mother of all spiderants. What’s worse, killing her will spawn her husband, King Aracobb, the daddy-man of all spiderants. Rest assured, many hunters paid the price for breaking up this happy home.



8

EDF: Insect Armageddon

We know what you’re saying: “it’s *Insect Armageddon*, dingus”. But hey, this game dropped mechanical arachnids in to spice up the slaughter, too. And make no mistake, it was a slaughter as these behemoths suffered from “boss epidermis syndrome” – that debilitating disease where your weakpoints glow.



9

White Knight Chronicles

This series had more spiders in it than the sub-levels of a junkie’s skin, or possibly even *your bed right now*. Their sheer volume didn’t impress us so much as their deliciously ‘English’ name. As a general rule, when christening a creature that fires white sputum, one should always steer clear of the term “sprog”.



10

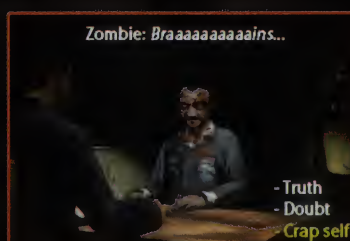
Ninja Gaiden 2

When you’re the beleaguered boss of a sub-rate ninja group called the Black Spider Clan, you’d better have one wicked spider tatt to make up for your crappy constituency. Best case scenario, BE a half-spider mutant thing that looks tough and talks like it has been gargling whiskey and gravel. This guy certainly talked a big game, but we couldn’t take his recurring boss fights seriously. Why? Because, as the first boss in the game, he was always going to be a dead spider-man walking.

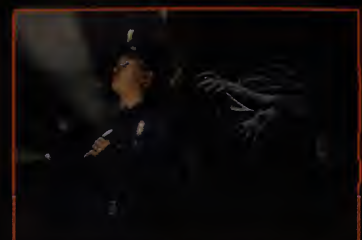
WHEN THE VICS RISE UNMURDERED
EVERY RAT BASTARD IS A PERP



Sort the corpses from the zombies
by kneeling really, really close to them



Use logic to pick holes in
your undead suspect's story



Use your highly deductive brain
to keep it inside your head, stupid



Around the World in PS3

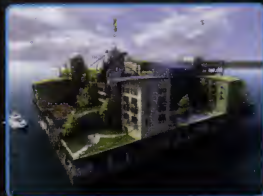
OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



REGISTER THIS

LOS ANGELES, USA

IOS developer Broken Thumb Apps has been fined US\$50,000 for allegedly violating the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). According to prosecutors several of the company's applications, including *Emily's Girl World* and *Emily's Runway High Fashion* violated the COPPA by collecting "thousands of email addresses" from kids who posted comments and requests for advice. It's good to see some punishment for the companies that don't give parents the opportunity to make smart choices when it comes to their children's sharing of information on their smart phones.



WOULD YOU KINDLY?

THE OCEAN

Peter Thiel, the founder of PayPal, is continuing his work towards making a Rapture-esque "Start-Up Country" off the coast of San Francisco. The floating sovereign nation would be oil-rig-style constructions positioned in areas free of regulation, laws, moral conventions and possibly pants. The Seasteading Institute says it will 'give people the freedom to choose the government they want instead of being stuck with the government they get.' Mr. Thiel called seasteading an 'open frontier for experimenting with new ideas for government.' Sounds like trouble to us. Good luck with all the DNA-splicers.



WEIRD SCIENCE

LONDON, UK

Gamers want to see the "perfect human being in digital form" Sony's president of Worldwide Studio, Shuhei Yoshida, has said of the games we'll be playing. "I think [that's] what people [will] want in games in 10 years," he said, "where you can't tell the difference if it's real or digital. In your reality it's a human." Sony's 3D chief Mick Hocking, weighed in on the discussion at the same developers event by saying "In 10 years, are we going to be able to interact with characters in the games? The more accurate they become, it's still an acting performance that's coming back at you." You're one step closer to falling in love with your Shepard.



MULTI FOR ALL

LONDON, UK

Your average single-player only experience will cease to exist by the time 2014 rolls around. That's the forecast of veteran game consultant Mark Cerny, who has worked with Sony on games such as *Crash Bandicoot* and *Jak & Daxter*. "Right now you sit in your living room and you're playing a game by yourself - we call it the sp mission or the single-player campaign," says Cerny. "In a world with Facebook I just don't think that's going to last." Cerny cites action RPG *Demon's Souls* as an example of where he sees the "solo experience" heading. Wonderful. Let's all get set for solo grieving. "OMG U saved the game? Noob"



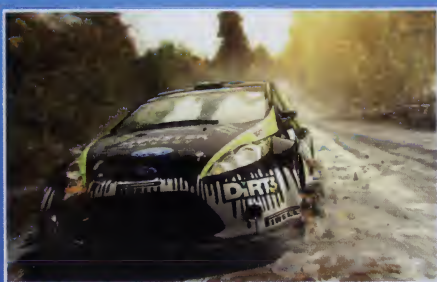
DROP DOWN AND GIVE US 20

COLOGNE, GERMANY

Sony's entering the exercise-gaming race, the publisher announced *Move Fitness* during its gamescom keynote. A brief teaser trailer shown to attendees offered a short but sweet look at what the final product may contain: Move-based mini-games and the sort of exercises that send us into cardiac arrest just from looking at them. We also spotted an interesting riff on *Fruit Ninja*'s food slicing antics. With body-thrashers like *WiiFit* and *Zumba Fitness* tearing up the sales charts, it was only a matter of time until we saw this. Here's hoping it shapes up well enough to shape us up well enough. Or something.

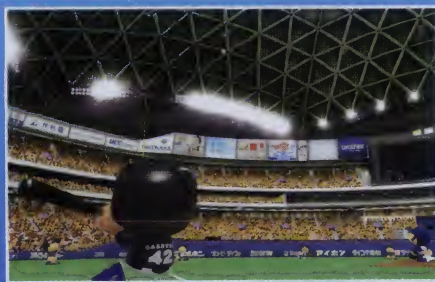
INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

EUROPE



- 1 **DiRT 3** Codemasters
- 2 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision
- 3 **Sniper: Ghost Warrior** City Interactive
- 4 **L.A. Noire** Rockstar
- 5 **Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood** Ubisoft

JAPAN



- 1 **Jikkyou Powerful Pro Yakyuu 2011** Konami
- 2 **Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood** Ubisoft
- 3 **Operation Flashpoint: Red River** Codemasters
- 4 **Alice: Madness Returns** EA
- 5 **SSIV: Arcade Edition** Capcom

USA



- 1 **NCAA Football 12** EA
- 2 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision
- 3 **Mortal Kombat** Warner Bros.
- 4 **Grand Theft Auto IV** Rockstar
- 5 **Bleach: Soul Resurreccion** NIS America

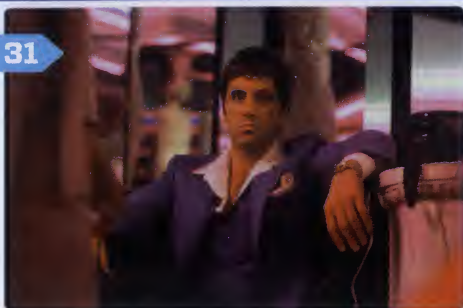
THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!

Aug 31

Scarface

One of the most iconic movies ever made, *Scarface*, hits Blu-ray today. Brian De Palma directed it, Oliver Stone wrote it, Al Pacino owned it as Tony Montana. There's a whole bunch of special features too.



Sept 8

Resistance 3

Insomniac's *Resistance 3* lands to finish the fight – or at least to kick more alien scum in the butt. We'll see you online: dusty Alice Springs is one of the multiplayer maps.



Sept 9

Footy Finals

NRL and AFL fans, prepare to lose your mind as your respective codes start the beginning of the end, entering their knockout stages.



Sept 9

Dead Island

Another shooter claws for your wallet – and your braaaaains. *Dead Island* and its zombie horde are out today, having somehow snatched a MA15+ rating.



Sept 11

US Open Tennis

The US Open Men's tennis finals are on tonight. We don't know who will on centre court, but you can bet that the winner will make a 'racquet' on the final point. Ha ha oh dear.



Sept 14

Star Wars

Mr. Beady, a.k.a. George Lucas, lets loose the monstrous nine-disc *Star Wars* Blu-ray set. Featuring all six films, a couch load of special feature and – you wouldn't think it's possible – more deleted scenes. See p34 to see how you can win a copy!



Sept 15

Source Code

Source Code is out on Blu-ray today, starring Jake Gyllenhaal as a soldier who's part of a time-travelling experiment. He's thrust back in time to live the same moment over and over, until he figures out how to stop terrorists.



Sept 24

Parklife

The Parklife music festival begins today in Melbourne, before heading to Perth (Sept 25) Brisbane (Oct 1) Sydney (Oct 2) and Adelaide (Oct 3). Digitalism, Duck Sauce and Gossip are some of the acts.



Sept 29

FIFA 12

The world's biggest sports game, *FIFA 12*, kicks itself off store shelves and into PS3s around the country. More than just a roster update, this latest version promises to be as big a leap as *09* was to *10*. That is, enormous.



Can't miss... Driver: San Francisco SEPTEMBER 2

It'll wrap you up in its luscious drifting arms and blow your mind with its storyline. All you need to do is learn to feather the throttle. Yep, *Driver's* back, and it's the best it's ever been. Check out our massive review on page 68, head to page 86 for a spoiler-filled Easter Egg then run to the shops and throw all your money at it.



Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

OUT NOW

Air Conflicts: Secret War
Genre: Flight
Distributor: AIE

Deus Ex: Human Revolution
Genre: Shooter/RPG Distributor:
Namco Bandai Partners

Rugby World Cup 2011
Genre: Sports
Distributor: AIE

Driver: San Francisco
Genre: Driving
Distributor: Ubisoft

Resistance 3
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Sony

Bodycount
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Namco Bandai
Partners

SEPTEMBER 2011

Dead Island
Genre: Shooter Distributor:
QVS Date: September 9

**Warhammer 40,000:
Space Marine**
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ
Date: September 9

Child of Eden
Genre: Odd Distributor:
Ubisoft Date: September 13

F1 2011
Genre: Racing Distributor:
Namco Bandai Partners
Date: September 22

Bleach: Soul Resurrection
Genre: Action Distributor:
Namco Bandai Partners
Date: September 22



FIFA 12
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA
Date: September 29

Atelier Totori
Genre: RPG Distributor:
Namco Bandai Partners
Date: September 29

NHL 12
Genre: Sports Distributor:
EA Date: TBC

Madden NFL 12
Genre: Sports Distributor:
EA Date: TBC

God of War Origins
Genre: Action-adventure
Distributor: Sony Date: TBC

**Ico and
Shadow of the Colossus**
Genre: Platformer Distributor:
Sony Date: TBC

PES 2012
Genre: Sports Distributor:
Mindscape Date: TBC

Supremacy MMA
Genre: Sports Distributor:
AIE Date: TBC

X-Men: Destiny
Genre: Sports Distributor:
Activision Date: TBC

OCTOBER 2011

NBA 2K12
Genre: Sports Distributor: 2K
Date: October 4

Twisted Metal
Genre: Racing Distributor: Sony
Date: October 4

RAGE
Genre: Adventure Distributor: AIE
Date: October 7

Dark Souls
Genre: Action Distributor:
Namco Bandai Partners Date:
October 6

Just Dance 3
Genre: Dance Distributor:
Ubisoft Date: October 11

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon
Genre: Flight Distributor: Namco
Bandai Partners Date: October 14

Batman: Arkham City
Genre: Action Distributor: Warner
Bros. Date: October 19

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One
Genre: Platformer Distributor:
Sony Date: October 19

Battlefield 3
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA
Date: October 27

Disgaea 4
Genre: RPG Distributor:
Namco Bandai Partners Date:
October 27

NOVEMBER 2011

**The Lord of the Rings:
War in the North**
Genre: RPG Distributor: Warner
Bros. Date: November 2

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
Genre: Action-adventure
Distributor: Sony
Date: November 4

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
Genre: Shooter Distributor:
Activision Date: November 8



The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
Genre: RPG Distributor: AIE
Date: November 11

Saints Row: The Third
Genre: Action Distributor:
THQ Date: November 15

Assassin's Creed Revelations
Genre: Action-adventure
Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: November 15

Need For Speed The Run
Genre: Racing Distributor: EA
Date: November 17

Sonic Generations
Genre: Platformer Distributor:
SEGA Date: November 22

WWE '12
Genre: Fighting Distributor:
THQ Date: November 25

Ultimate Marvel Vs. Capcom 3
Genre: Fighting Distributor:
THQ Date: November

2011/2012

**Metal Gear Solid
HD Collection**
Genre: Action Distributor:
Mindscape Date: TBC 2011



DmC
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ
Date: TBC 2011

**Resident Evil:
Operation Raccoon City**
Genre: Action Distributor:
TBA Date: TBC 2011

► Limited Edition

Dark Souls

Set in a rich, dark fantasy universe, the game's tense dungeon crawling, fearsome enemy encounters and groundbreaking online features combine for an utterly compelling experience. *Dark Souls* breaks down barriers with a seamless world that encourages exploration and demands adaptability. As players encounter terrifying enemies and discover new areas, the game's foundation of challenge and reward permeates the experience, delivering an unparalleled sense of achievement.

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JB HIFI \$94
Estimated dispatch date: 20/10/2011

GAME \$84
Estimated dispatch date: 6/10/2011



Rocksmith

Genre: Music **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC 2011

Silent Hill: Downpour

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** TBC 2011

SSX

Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Activision **Date:** January 2012

Mass Effect 3

Genre: Action RPG **Distributor:** EA **Date:** March 6 2012

Tomb Raider

Genre: Action-adventure
Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBC 2012

Agent

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Rockstar **Date:** TBC

Spec Ops: The Line

Genre: Action **Distributor:** 2K
Date: TBC 2012

Metal Gear Solid: Rising

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** TBC 2012

The Last Guardian

Genre: Adventure **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** TBC 2012

Max Payne 3

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Rockstar **Date:** TBC 2012

Hitman Absolution

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners
Date: TBC 2012

Prey 2

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBA **Date:** TBC 2012

Final Fantasy XIII-2

Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC 2012

► Limited Edition

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon is a completely new Action Shooting game. Aircraft are shredded to pieces, canopies shattered, enemy troops annihilated and buildings toppled. No detail is left untouched. Even the dust kicked up from aircraft exhaust is realistically recreated!

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Estimated dispatch date: 13/10/2011

JB HIFI \$94.98
Estimated dispatch date: 13/10/2011

GAME \$99.95
Estimated dispatch date: 13/10/2011

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC 2012

Ridge Racer Unbounded

Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners
Date: TBC 2012

Dust 514

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBA **Date:** TBC 2012

BioShock Infinite

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** 2K **Date:** TBC 2012



FIFA 12

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Batman: Arkham City

Soar into Arkham City, the new maximum security "home" for all of Gotham City's thugs, gangsters and insane criminal masterminds. Set inside the heavily fortified walls of a sprawling district in the heart of Gotham City, this highly anticipated sequel to *Arkham Asylum* introduces a brand-new story that draws together a new, all-star cast of classic characters and murderous villains from the Batman universe, as well as a vast range of new and enhanced gameplay features to deliver the ultimate experience as the Dark Knight.

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Estimated dispatch date: 19/10/2011

JB HI-FI \$147
Preorder to get the Robin Challenge Maps, Red Robin character skin, as well as Black Mask Hideout and Freight Train Escape map
Estimated dispatch date: 19/10/2011

GAME \$149.95
Preorder to get the Batman Beyond ingame skin
Estimated dispatch date: 19/10/2011

In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"You know, we've really wanted to do multiplayer since the first *Mass Effect*. I mean, it's a big universe, with a great

story and tons of interesting characters, so why wouldn't we want to share that in the multiplayer space? But we've still not figured out the right way to do it. There is always a way to do things"

BioWare's **Ryan Warden** at 2011 gamescom.

"Without giving too much away, you can expect that from all of the military hardware the Colonial Marines have access to you're going to get the chance to either play around with it or be part of using it"



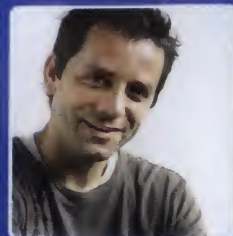
Gearbox's chief creative director **Brian Martel** dancing around whether or not Power Loaders will be useable in *Aliens: Colonial Marines*.



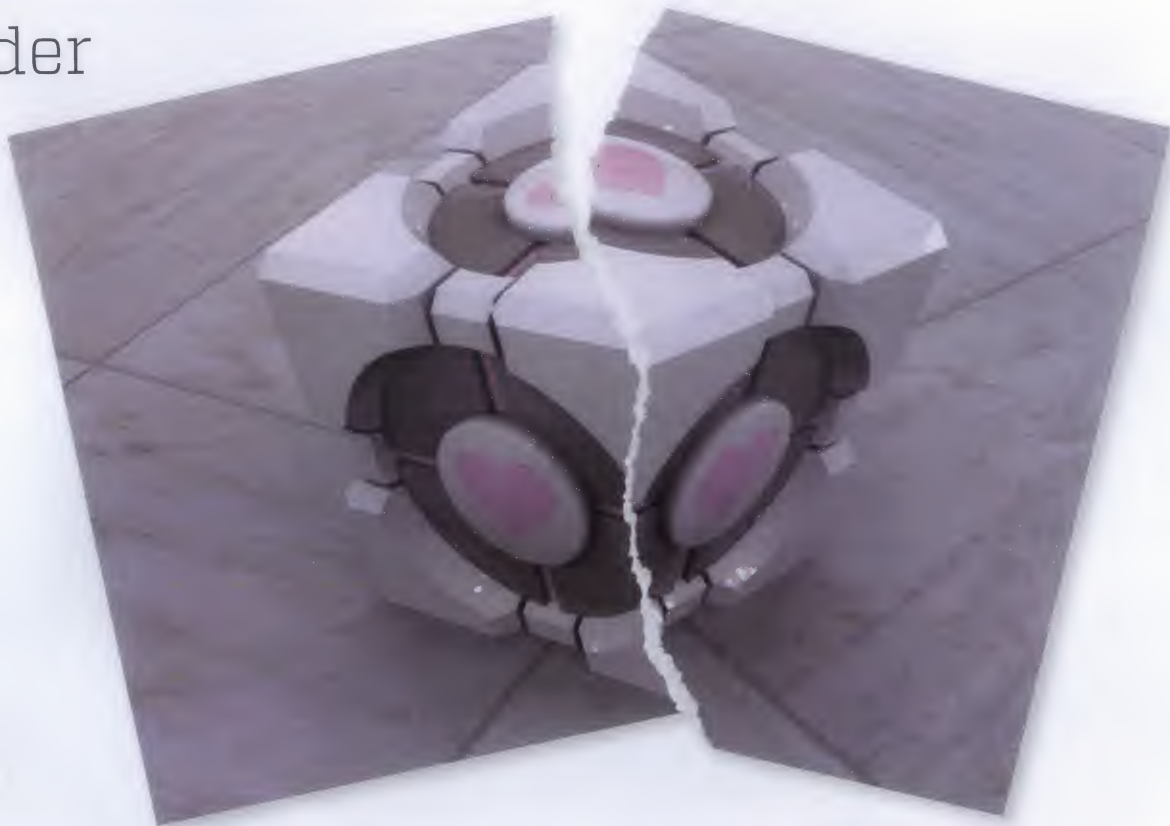
"And all I want to do, if you will, is to have them rot from the core"

EA CEO **John Riccitiello's** sentiments on what he hopes to do to Activision's star franchise, *Call of Duty*. Them's fighting words.

"In order for one to win, the other doesn't have to lose"



Meanwhile, **Eric Hirshberg**, Activision CEO, takes a more philosophical approach as he responds to Riccitiello's rhetoric. So nyah.



IT'S BETTER TO HAVE LOVED...

...than to have never mopped up your tears with a DualShock

Really good videogames are ruining me. I got to the end of *Portal 2* and felt drained, like I'd just Bear Grylls'd myself up the side of a mountain. But it wasn't that I was physically spent – my emotions had been torn at, tossed into absurd situations where I was both pressing on and gripping as tightly as I could to see what happened next in the riveting plot.

Half-Life 2 did the same with *that* ending, after I clawed all the way to the top of the tower and confronted Breen, the filthy snake. *Borderlands* was just an epic journey as I sought new quests, finding new loot, quests, loot, claptraps, loot and so on. *Far Cry 2*, even with its flaws, left me feeling dirty as there was no 'right' way to end it with its binary decision, and I'd partly become the monster I was trying to stop. *BioShock* was a tragedy. *Dead Space* tore my nerves to shreds. *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* tore my thumbs to shreds.

As soon as the credits rolled on these games I felt like it would be impossible to play anything else for a while. They'd affected me in ways I hadn't expected. Nothing else mattered, and simultaneously I just couldn't imagine putting any energy into anything new.

Portal 2 still makes me quiver. I was in a blue funk for about a week after I shot that final, fateful portal. It was the end of an intense

tryst that was infinitely tempting and thrilling, but could only end one way. What could I do?


I dived back in, hoping to find the something that was missing.

And I promptly sucked the magic out of it.

I knew its tricks. I knew what it had to offer, what it was going to do next and how it was going to do it. I thought about trying to beat it in record time, wringing as many Trophies out of it as I could and pick away

at the seams, but when I started to treat it as an object I felt like I'd killed the thing that I'd cared so much about.

Trying the developer's commentary was even worse. I can appreciate how much effort and thought Valve put into the game and the way that they revealed their secrets, but every time I played a node I felt like I was performing an autopsy. Gabe Newell was nothing but a jolly coroner.

Like any break up, I think it's going to take time to recover but I doubt that I'll go back. I've tried the other games that snared me in their tempestuous, haunting, tear-jerking web, and some have left me empty while others have left me smiling when I played them through again. It's been a few months since the credits rolled on *Portal 2*, but really, I think I'll leave the cover closed, and the memories where I left them. 

"Gabe Newell was nothing but a jolly coroner"



OPINION
Paul Taylor

Paul Taylor isn't often sent into a stupor, but that's because there aren't that many games that yank on his heart like a five-year-old with a helium balloon.

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DON'T FEEL SLEAZY JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE EASY

Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Breaking Things When the Brake Stops Working

The 'games reviewer' profession is fraught with two things: paradoxes, and butt cheek lesions caused by couch drag. This is an article about the first one. The other day, while waiting for a package to be made ready, a nosy courier broke logic by calling me a "pussy for being hardcore" and "insane for not trying insanity".

The theme of his one-sided conversation? The difficulty setting I was about to select on *Game X*. The reward for his outside-the-box appraisal of my skills? Irony. He left our cube of an office through a window and I beat the wrap by claiming "temporary insanity, your honour".

Zutroy's social skills and personal hygiene responsibilities were severely lacking that day but his snide comments did plant a seed. Why do I always punish myself on the hardest difficulty? Could I be happy finishing my games in half the time? Would the money that'd save me on lesion cream let me buy that pony I've always wanted – or would the saddle sores negate the purchase?

So many questions.

In the search for answers I loaded *DIRT 3*, erased my hard-earned Expert save file and busted myself back down to beginner. The reek of rookie was thick that day my friends, and I could feel the self respect leaking out of me with every driving aid enabled. The gorge rose

in my throat when I spotted the option for a racing line in a rally game. And, when I realised the auto-braking aid never changed that line from "go flat knackers green", I'm not ashamed to say I threw up in my mouth.

Playing easy was hard. But after much perseverance and a few events, something quite unexpected happened. I started having fun. And not "flip the bird at the TV because I no longer have

to punch myself in the face because I've finally won fun", either. Genuine, honest to goodness, fun.

Suddenly *DIRT 3* was no longer out to roort me. No longer did Codemasters' physics system want to code-master my ass by booking me an aquaplane flight to treesville. Essentially, I was now playing a beautiful handling, gorgeous looking version of one of my favourite old-school games: *Sega Rally*. Better still, this was a version of *Sega Rally* that didn't take the piss out of me with a "Game over yeahhh!" jingle. Because there was no game over here, only pure, unadulterated WIN.

The more I think about it, the more it makes sense to me: why should I deny myself a gaming experience laced with win? I'm now replaying all of my "expertly beaten" games on the most idiotic, mouth-breathingly easy difficulty possible. I recommend you all try it (with a bucket within easy reach). 🍷

"Why should I deny myself a gaming experience laced with win?"



OPINION

Adam Mathew

Adam Mathew is a person who finds it Easy to be Insane. Despite what this document suggests, he will probably continue as is.

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TECHLAND



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PC



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“Playing *Call of Duty* will no
sooner turn you into a soldier
than playing **FIFA** will turn
you into a footballer”

IF THE BOOT FITS

This town ain't big enough for the videogame industry and the Australian Christian Lobby, but has the ACL just shot itself in the foot?

“A man with a conviction is a hard man to change. Tell him you disagree and he turns away. Show him facts or figures and he questions your sources. Appeal to logic and he fails to see your point.”

That was Stanford University psychologist Leon Festinger describing a famous case study in psychology back in the 1950s. Festinger and several of his colleagues had infiltrated the Seekers, a small Chicago-area cult whose members thought they were communicating with aliens. Through the group's leader the cult believed they had been given the precise date for the end of the world – December 21, 1954.

Of course, the word didn't end in 1954. What did the Seekers do when challenged by the fact they had been wrong all along? They simply accepted the leader's explanation that they had been spared at the last moment and carried on being crackpots.

People don't want to change their minds. It's why it's impossible for any games industry commentator to have a proper debate with the likes of the Australian Christian Lobby's Jim Wallace.

Jim Wallace is probably not an idiot. Idiots don't get put in charge of one of the world's most elite special forces units; Wallace was commander of the Australian SASR during his 32-year military career. But in the words of Michael Brant Shermer, founder of The Skeptics Society, “Smart people believe weird things because they are skilled at defending beliefs they arrived at for non-smart reasons.”

Illusory correlation is how people falsely perceive an association between two elements or situations. For instance, a common example of illusory correlation is when people construct false associations between membership in a statistical minority group and rare (and typically negative) behaviours. A common example of illusory correlation is when people assume killers kill because they listened to Marilyn Manson, watched *The Matrix*, played *Doom* or participated in some other sort of niche activity.

It's part of what's known as confirmation bias; it's a tendency for people to favour only information that confirms their own preconceptions or hypotheses, regardless of whether the information is actually true. People tend to interpret ambiguous evidence as supporting their existing position.

It's why, when a right-wing self-described Christian Norwegian – who acquaintances have described as a gun-lover obsessed with what he saw as the threats of multiculturalism and Muslim immigration – mentions playing a few videogames during the lead up to his horrific crimes against the people of Norway, men like the Australian Christian Lobby's Jim Wallace are all too quick to pounce.

“If there are even a few deranged minds that can be taken over the edge by an obsession with violent games it is in every Australian's interest that we ban them,” says Wallace in a June 25 ACL press release.

What Wallace has done here is nothing short of astonishing. Is he really under the impression that Anders Behring Breivik was “taken over the edge” purely by a violent videogame? Does he really believe that Norway's deadliest day since World War II was triggered by nothing more than a videogame?

Wallace's offensive simplification of this tragedy is as stunning as it is disgusting. Wallace carefully and conveniently ignores the fact that, in his 1528-page manifesto, Breivik

makes it quite clear what “tipped the scales” for him, and it wasn't a videogame. At all. *Modern Warfare 2* wasn't the difference between Breivik living a normal life and Breivik orchestrating an unprecedented massacre. *Modern Warfare 2* didn't make Breivik an insane anti-Islam extremist.

Breivik mentions *Modern Warfare* in the context of the videogame itself five times. That's five times in 769,412 words. He uses the word Christian in some form 2218 times. He uses the words Muslim or Islam in various forms a combined total of 6995 times. This manifesto isn't about how *Modern Warfare 2* made Breivik want to slaughter dozens of innocent people; it's the babble of a bigoted madman on a crusade of evil. Wallace is also either blissfully ignorant or wilfully dismissive of the fact that the manifesto includes 10 pages of Bible quotes and historical justifications for atrocities. Videogames really don't appear to any more than one of Breivik's various hobbies, which include (by his own admission) weightlifting, snowboarding, opera, theatre, art, and science fiction, among other interests.

That Breivik has played *Modern Warfare 2* is entirely unsurprising. Almost every single male I know between 20 and 40, inside the games industry and outside of it, has played *Modern Warfare 2*. Before *Black Ops* came out it was the fastest-selling entertainment product in history. It's more successful than virtually every film ever made. Breivik also mentioned he liked *Star Wars* and *The Lord of the Rings*, just like most people who own a DVD player.

That Breivik, at one stage, points to *Modern Warfare 2* multiplayer as part of his “training” is unsettling, but playing *Call of Duty* will no sooner turn you into a soldier than playing *FIFA* will turn you into a footballer. *Call of Duty* can “teach” you where the bullets go to kill a person, just like *FIFA* can show you where the ball goes to win, but it's not going to make you any better at it. I don't think the army is going to sell off all its training facilities and just buy every soldier a PS3 to keep in shape.

That Wallace and the ACL have used a tragedy of this scale to further their own agenda is appalling, but it really shouldn't be a surprise that organisations like the ACL need to resort to tactics like these in a country where organisations like the ACL are rapidly losing relevance. Not only is Australia one of the least religious nations in the developed world (on par with similarly secular countries such as Japan, the Netherlands, Finland, and France) but savvy, online Christians are also distancing themselves from the intolerant ACL. The ACL knows it and they're trying to make hay while the sun shines, desperately trying to make an impact before there's no one left that'll listen.

Wallace showed his true colours earlier this year with a hate-fuelled Twitter post on ANZAC Day (“Just hope that as we remember Servicemen and women today we remember the Australia they fought for – wasn't gay marriage and Islamic! [sic]”). His ill-timed rant was met with widespread outrage and he removed the post claiming he'd been misinterpreted. Why he's permitted on television in 2011 after comments like this is baffling.

If Wallace were shouting this on a street corner wearing a cardboard sign he'd be ignored. The solution? The media (us included) should simply stop putting him in the spotlight. The only reason he thinks he's a cowboy is because we keep giving him a f—king hat. 🐎



OPINION Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist sobered by such a staggering act of violence and incensed it took less than 24 hours for the ACL to exploit it for its own agenda.

inbox



▼ LETTER OF THE MONTH

YEARNING JAPANESE

I'm sure you are aware of a little game called *Catherine* that was released recently in the US and the apparent nature of its never arriving status here in Australia. When I read an article of it being picked up by a distributor here, Deep Silver, I was shocked, flabbergasted, humbled even. There was actually someone here who was still willing to fight the good fight and bring us those highly anticipated games some of us have been hanging out for. With the lack of region coding, some of us take for granted those games that are actually available in the corner store, and I personally prefer grabbing a copy there over importing and fumbling around with offshore accounts for DLC.

Recently another game, *No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise* arrived in store BEFORE the US, several weeks ahead of them in fact, and this puzzled me. Generally, being in Australia and such, we are the shafted community in gaming. Everything developed in Japan where a small portion is translated and sent to the US, and even a smaller portion of that finds its way down under.

Now in the case of *No More Heroes*, it was already translated,

fully made and out on the Wii, then ported to PS3 and released here first. So, they can release them here easily, they just don't care?

I know, it's all about the games that the distributors think are worth bringing over, but it just agitates me that there are so many quality games out there we will never see because someone in the chain of command doesn't think it's worth it. Gamers in Australia have to put in that extra yard other gamers around the world don't have to (see: importing *Mortal Kombat* madness).

It's probably a little worse off for me since I love RPGs and games based on anime, but I just hope one day we can all walk down to the corner store and find that game we have been hanging out for, undelayed, unbanned and unbelievably awesome.

Of course, there will be games we will probably never see though, like *Persona 5*.

Michael Bonvino, via email

Deep Silver's announced that it's bringing *Catherine* to Europe, but Deep Silver don't have an Australian operation. Deep Silver's *Dead Island* is being distributed by QVS in Australia as we speak, however, so perhaps that's a good sign...



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A COPY OF:

Driver: San Francisco

It's not Japanese but it is awesome. Enjoy!

Trophy whorefare

Hi guys,

I was reading some PS3 forums on Trophies the other day and found a discussion surrounding how many Trophies does a gamer need to earn your respect. I for one like to collect Trophies and have found games have developed a longer life span for me as I seek to obtain as many Trophies as possible. I've played through some games three or four times to do so. However this is only because I have enjoyed these games and have had many hours of fun replaying them. I also understand that many gamers don't play games to collect Trophies, as Trophies don't necessarily make a great game any better. I think back to the first *Uncharted*. I played that game to death and then did so again when it was patched with Trophy support. Trophies did not make it more fun, it gave me a reason to pull it out again and once more enjoy a great game. It struck me as a little strange that gamers I meet online would determine my level of skill as a gamer and whether they should respect me based on the number of Trophies I have.

Some gamers thought Trophies were not a good indicator of a gamers skill. This is true for a number of reasons. Firstly, many gamers only ask one question when deciding to play a game, is it fun. I don't believe franchises such as *Uncharted*, *Batman* and *Assassin's Creed* (to name a few) would see less sales if they didn't have Trophy support. Gamers would still play these games because they know they are likely to experience a great game. Secondly, many gamers couldn't care less about Trophies but still kick your arse online. Thirdly, I believe that the addition of Trophies has made mediocre and downright awful games more attractive to those who hunt Trophies. How else could you explain a platinum for *MW2* in the same list as a platinum for *Hannah Montana*? I don't mean to be judgemental but it doesn't make sense to me.

Some gamers expressed that high completion rates in Trophy lists regardless of the number of platinum's was respectable. So a short list of games showing 100% each was worthy of respect. I think this is quite a reasonable opinion but again I think it is not without a degree of fallibility. Many games now have an online component to the Trophy list. There are those who are not interested in online multiplayer and tend to focus on the single-player component. Should they be less respected as a gamer due to an incomplete Trophy list? Also, some games may not have lived up to the expectations of gamers and they move on to something more enjoyable. Let's face it: with the number of great games coming out, the desire to finish one game and move on to the next is high.

Some gamers thought that difficult Platinum Trophies were worthy of respect. I can't argue with this as there are some games where I would just not be good enough to achieve the Platinum Trophy. It actually impresses me that someone would have the skill or put in the time to achieve some of the harder Platins. Kudos to the hardcore. A gamer could only have a completed Trophy list for *Demon's Souls* and they would have my respect.

Finally, some gamers thought respect should go to those with a large number of Platins. Again, I don't think I can argue with this but this doesn't mean gamers with low Trophy counts should be disregarded. A high Platinum count indicates a gamer devoted to not only playing games but hunting Trophies which I believe can be exclusive from each other. Imagine having to play crap games to achieve a platinum. Crazy or dedicated?

After reading some of the responses I decided to have a look at the Trophy counts of some of the gamers to see what a high Trophy count would look like. I

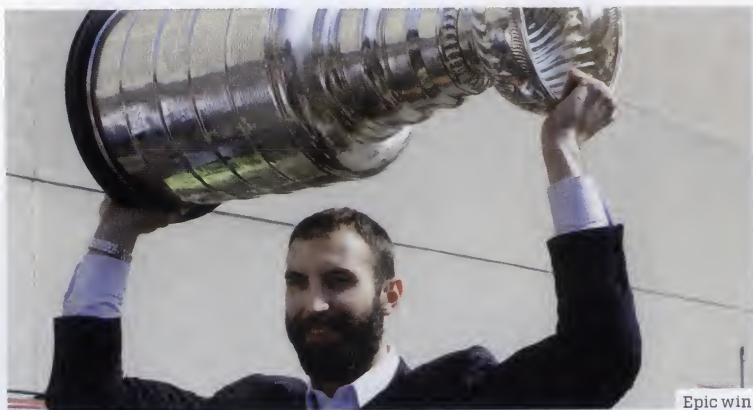
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Epic win

“My mother says I will be bored behind a work desk every day”

nodded my head in quiet respect when I saw 89 Platins then 110, 180 and then I almost fell off my chair when I saw 254 Platins. Apparently there are others with even higher numbers. Seriously! Could this possibly be true? Think about it, how long have trophies been around for, mid 2008? About three years, even if it is four years that is an average of approximately 63 Platins a year.

Firstly, who has the time to devote to this? Do they sleep, work, have a family? What's going on? Secondly, they must be extremely wealthy to afford to buy all these games or even hire them for weeks on end in order to get the Platinum. Either that or they have many generous friends. Are there even that many games with Platinum Trophies?

Personally I think this is quite impossible. Anyway what's the point of being number one when most people think you're a wanker who is hacking Trophies, there's no respect in that. What do you guys think? I would be interested in hearing your thoughts and those of your readers. And if you're interested in the number of trophies I have collected, I have 15 Platins and have just passed 2000 total trophies. I'm quite proud of this even though I may not be respected for it.

David Fox, via email

Well, there's a difference between Trophies that take skill and Trophies that just take time. Trophies can be a decent indicator of gaming prowess but they can also just be a sign of a gamer with more spare time on his or her hands than other gamers. Anybody can grind out a bunch of straightforward Trophy with enough free time but tricky ones are a different story altogether.

Career path

Dear the best magazine on this planet,

I'm currently in year 11 doing my senior schooling. Just the other night, I drove and dropped my eldest sister off at her friend's house and I was invited inside to meet a few new people. One person who I met who I remember almost every word of our conversation was my sister's friend's boyfriend because he was telling me his studies at Qantm College. I knew who they were because of reading the advertisements in the OPS magazine and every time I see that page with Qantm College on it, I always think just how awesome it'll be to study those courses offered. Anyway, we were talking about how he was doing a Major in Game Design and how much fun he is having with it. After

talking for about 20 or so minutes, I did have to leave but I had so many questions to ask him about what he is doing.

The whole concept of being in a team of people and designing an original game sounds so fun. I have been on the college's website looking at the courses and all of the requirements so far are everything I can achieve. I'm not going to lie, I do find it quite humorous that to do game programming you must do a LOT of mathematics (which is what I am doing at the moment), but people like me, instead of studying would rather play the games in the now, instead of studying mathematics to pass that course and do a games programming course in the future.

As of today, I'm still not sure what I want to do. I was talking to my mother about Qantm but she wants me to do something else, something more practical. Maybe she's right when she says that I will get bored sitting behind a desk day in and day out (but you guys don't look all that bored, right?). I have loved games ever since I

can remember as a little child – my first memory of video games goes back when I was four or five years old and I woke up around 3:00am to play my Super Nintendo. Whether I do choose a career in Interactive Entertainment – or anything along those lines – or something completely different, I will still love my games all the same.

I know you guys don't really do any of those sorts of things, but in a sense you do the same – your work consists of video games; something I sincerely enjoy. My question is that did anyone at the OPS headquarters have the idea to do what they're doing (as their job) or was it just something that was merely a dream but now it's something that they love doing? My mother says I will be bored behind a work desk every day, but it would be something that I would love to do. At the moment, it is my dream job, but I don't know whether it would be my so called dream job when it becomes my reality.

Anyway guys, love the magazine and I have been reading almost every word in each issue now, which isn't quite like me to read that much – maybe you guys are just getting better each month!

Joel Meekings, via email

Nobody should really have a say in what you do except you. Desk jobs ARE boring, but the videogame industry is hardly a regular desk job. You're not just pushing pencils around, you're creating something. The Aussie videogame industry has been rocked with a lot of layoffs recently, and there are a lot of game developers pulling beers instead of making games right now, but hopefully this will turn around with the new tax breaks.

As for us? Well, Luke's mum hid the AV cable to his PSone during his HSC. The rest is history. He reminds her of that every now and then.

Cuttings

► Stay frosty

Mr. Freeze looks so badass in Arkham City. Batman don't f--k with the Freeze!

Joel Janus Garcia, via Facebook

Cool.

► Driven wild

Just played the *Driver: San Francisco* demo. Can't wait!

Shane McDonald, via Facebook

Turn to page 68 to make that wait even harder.

► School's in

I hope there is going to be *Bully 2* for PS3.

Mathew Cooper, via Facebook

Us too.

► Unjust

Bit disappointed in *Just Cause 2*. Lexie-Batman Taylor, via Facebook

[stunned silence]

► Mother's Day

The awesome feeling when you come home to a new OPS issue, the awkward feeling when your issue is sent to your mum's name 'cause you mixed up the billing and shipping details.

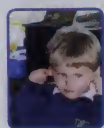
Rory Gardiner, via Facebook

Nah, we always send your mum a copy personally. Say hi for us!

Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia on facebook.

▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Seb Withers
Mass Effect 2

“Had it for PC but the PS3 version is miles better.”



Kurt Harris
DIRT 3

“Ripper of a game.”



Adrian Emerson
Catherine

“Good challenging levels and a suspense filled story.”



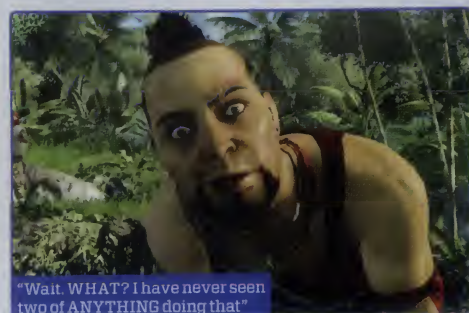
Michael Bonvino
BioShock 2

“If there is anything wetter than Rapture, its my pants!”

Caption This ►

You put the words to the screen. Simple.

Alex Williams made us laugh. He wins.



“Wait. WHAT? I have never seen two of ANYTHING doing that”

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M1100PS

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This Month

- 36 Dead Island
- 40 GoldenEye 007: Reloaded
- 42 Aliens: Colonial Marines
- 44 Darksiders II
- 46 Saints Row: The Third
- 48 Dishonored
- 49 Need for Speed The Run
- 49 F1 2011
- 49 Far Cry 3
- 49 FIFA 12
- 49 Journey
- 49 Star Trek
- 49 The Adventures of Tintin: The Game



G'day! Few zombies about. Better ring Daz, Shaz,

Zombie lore is so ubiquitous right now the irony is it feels like entertainment media's in the cadaverous grip of a living dead invasion. Shamblers are everywhere, from the idiot box (*The Walking Dead*) to the big screen (take your pick). Even anime (*Highschool of the Dead*), treasured comic book favourites (*Marvel Zombies*), and vintage period fiction haven't been spared (*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*).

Gaming, on the other decaying hand, has seen comparatively little in the way of wanton rotting apocalypse. Why it's not busy squeezing the fetid milk from this undead cash-cow like everyone else we don't know. Valve's *Left 4 Dead* co-op shop is sadly closed to the Sony public and the *Resident Evil* franchise has technically abandoned the killer corpse altogether, so all we get in terms of AAA is *Black Ops*' Zombies Mode, *Dead Rising*'s increasing shift towards utter whackiness and the one-off Wild West *Undead Nightmare*.

None are the complete package we crave; the

world on fire, the former loved ones come back to nibble our arteries, total gripping hopelessness.

Polish devs Techland might be onto something, and that something is *Dead Island*. At least, that trailer it unleashed on unsuspecting gamers the globe over back in February would have you believe as much.

Yeah, that trailer. You know the one.

You probably watched it and sat there for a stunned minute or two like most of us did, mentally piecing together the back-to-front scene of affecting familial horror you couldn't really believe just happened.

As is the style of the times, no gameplay was actually shown. Dizzy excitement soon turned to forum skepticism, belayed somewhat by eventual YouTube evidence of an open-world paradise gone to lurking hell – and hey, you're one of its few survivors. Additionally, the four-player co-op PS3 owners didn't get with *Left 4 Dead* would be made up to us here, now, on this fictional tropical island called Banoi

The Pitch

Most zombie-filled holiday ever

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SURVIVAL-HORROR

EXPECTED RELEASE:

SEPTEMBER 9

DISTRIBUTOR: QVS

DEVELOPER: TECHLAND

PLAYERS: 1-4

Island

and Mick-dog

wedged somewhere between Papua New Guinea and Australia.

Location, location, location. *Dead Island's* location is important, because it means there are quite a few Aussie characters about. "Great," you think, suddenly drifting back to sweet, ass-tastic memories of *Mass Effect 2's* Miranda. Make that alleged Aussies in this case. See, unlike BioWare, Techland hasn't gone to the trouble of hiring any locals to voice the notable amount of ocker present throughout the game, relying instead on comical stereotyping to do the job. It seems a strange oversight given the many True Blue survivors braving Banoi's bloodied beaches — one of which is even a playable character, Purna — and the result is a lot of very, very silly artificial Australian caricatures that are more Steve Irwin than reality.

Our Kiwi friends have a few things to cringe about too, with their sole representative being a Maori lifeguard boasting a face full of tribal ink but a voice like Crocodile Dundee after a

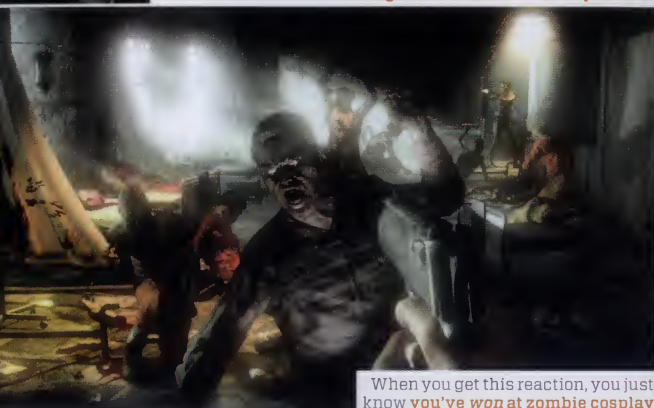
few durries. If you're going into this one craving genuine tension, forget it. If, however, you just want to crack some zombie heads with a board with a nail in it, well. You're in a lot of luck.

Beating the dead back to death is what it's all about and, although our time with the preview didn't include any co-op play, it's easy to imagine how it might work in practice. While nothing like *Dead Island's* fundamental concept has ever been done before, per se, Techland has drawn on a fair few recent releases for inspiration around the edges.

Unusually, *Borderlands* is the first and most obvious. Prior to starting your game, you pick one of four horribly underwhelming characters to go cadaver-bashing with. Proof the Techland crew learned everything there was to know about Americans and the Chinese from the same Big Book of Cliches that told them about Australians, Sam B is a typically oafish rapper from the block, Logan is a fallen NFL star haunted by bad life decisions, and Xian Mei



Like this? Why not pre-order *Disemboweler IV*, the game where condemned criminals **dig at each other with rusty hooks?**



When you get this reaction, you just know **you've won at zombie cosplay**



Our zombie escape plan **does not involve high heels.** They come in later on, when you're all too dead to judge us



The brains of the slain **lay mainly on the plain**

Zombs on film

Dead Island's fair dinkum derp is unlikely to get you sweating, so have these ready by the player for some real shambling thrills.

Dawn of the Dead

Not Romero's original, Zack Snyder's 2004 remake. That's right. Against all expectations, it was terrifying stuff then and it's still terrifying stuff now. Argh, the baby-zombie scene, make it stop.

Zombie Strippers

Stupid on paper, hilarious in practice. Also gross. Just ask Robert 'Krueger' Englund, who cops death via undead giney. Its Japanese counterpart, the super-subtle *Big Tits Zombie*, is even better/worse.

Zombi 2

The best thing Lucio Fulci ever did. He might've been trying to cash in on the success of the original *Dawn of the Dead* with this one's cheeky title (it's not actually the sequel to anything), but by golly is this film great. Shark versus zombie!

Braindead

Peter Jackson's unhealthy penchant for Elijah Wood's ring aside, he's a sick man. As if *Bad Taste* wasn't messed up enough, he then gave 1992 the goriest zombie flick ever made. Upturned lawnmowers have a million uses.

Dead Snow

Absolute ludicrousness from Norway. Seven ornery students alone in an isolated cabin? Check. The sudden discovery of Nazi gold? Check. The subsequent awakening of Nazi zombies who want their Nazi gold back? Check. It's got it all, really.

"If you get caught unawares a zombie in a bikini might latch onto you and go for the throat"

is smarter than the entire universe. However, it's former Sydney-based Aboriginal detective (we're not making this up) Purna who takes the absolute cake here. The mouth on this woman is also the most atrocious of the lot, curiously.

Each one of these hideous creatures specialises in a different type of weapon (blunt instruments for Sam B, throwing weapons for Logan, sharp stabby things for Xian, and firearms for Purna) and each one of them has a completely different skill tree to navigate whenever you gain enough XP to level up. Sounding familiar? It gets cosier. Almost immediately, you'll realise you can rummage through just about anything to find money and random odds 'n ends that you'll use later to upgrade, customise and even create your weapons at sporadically-placed work benches. You'll also need to splash cash to repair them too, because after repeated thwackings, your stuff starts to fall apart. Hello, *Fallout 3*.

The need to undertake quests edges *Dead Island* even further towards lite RPGdom, with the game's central narrative of "Escape!" flanked by the lesser needs of random survivors you'll invariably stumble across. Miraculously, you're

totally immune to the effects of Banoi's mystery zombie plague, so that means you have to do absolutely everything for everyone and no-one ever helps, ever. It makes for some unintentionally amusing dialogue from NPCs as they attempt to justify why they're sending you out into the death-infested sands all by yourself so you can do something dangerous for them, but ultimately that just means more action for you. This is where *Dead Island* shines the brightest, but it's not without its flaws, either.

Combat is predominantly hand-to-hand until much later in the game when guns presumably start to become more common, but even then we're told you'll periodically run low on ammo and it's back to ol' faithful (your boat-paddle). If you're worried things are going to wind up a bit stiff and unremarkable, start thinking less like *Condemned* and more along the lines of *Xeno Clash*. Although the ragdoll physics can be a bit ropey, beating back rotten bodies with your crowbar is a brutally enjoyable affair. Simple and intuitive, too. Bash, smash, crash, sometimes block. Being able to throw and retrieve weapons frequently results

Homerun or run home? We're inclined to try both and in that order



in perforated skulls and a gruesome "splutch!" sound, and each character can acquire certain skills that can be triggered for short bursts of slow-motion devastation or other such juiced-up carnage enhancers.

If you get caught unawares, a zombie in a bikini might latch onto you and go for the throat. In that case, mash whatever buttons flash up onscreen or learn to love your new voice-box. Unfortunately, grappling with the undead via brief QTE is nigh-on unavoidable in the first place because Techland has done that thing where they cheaply spawn zombies behind you from out of nowhere. As a result, you'll constantly wind up doing the *Dead Island* tango, spinning around to check your rear for telling smells every time a brawl breaks out.

Shades of *Left 4 Dead* enter the piece when the first of *Dead Island's* über-zombs hit the scene. Whilst we didn't run into anything that filled us with the same kind of tippy-toe terror as the aforementioned's Witch, our playthrough culminated in a muscular meeting with The Thug. A beefier, lumbering take on the game's average dead guy, if he gets too close he sends you careening across the screen and into a helpless heap where his starving minions will start readying their cutlery. All that close combat we'd gotten so handy with and suddenly it's no good. What's a former Sydney-based Aboriginal detective to do? That conspicuous propane tank looks pretty explosive. Let's heave it at him and piff a diving knife into it. Voila, Thug ala burnt and dead (again). We'd also managed to just about kill ourselves, too. Good times, good times.

Ultimately, *Dead Island* is shaping up to be not so much a survival horror title as a screaming mad FPS rampage that will no doubt fare a lot better in its full four-player co-op glory. Its presentation is so bad it'll possibly become kind of endearing, really, which may or may not elevate it to the same kind of cult status crappy horror movies enjoy depending on how willing gamers are to forgive the fact it manages to dispense with any and all of the visceral emotion suggested by that trailer with a few devastatingly silly stereotypes. **Toby McCasker**

They Say

"*Dead Island* combines first-person action with a heavy focus on melee combat, character development and customisation of a vast array of weapons. All of these gameplay features are presented in a dark story inspired by classic zombie movies with a gritty and engrossing campaign that can be played with up to four players in co-op mode"

We Say

One foot in the grave and the other on a banana skin.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

Dear Eurocom, please include an
invincibility cheat called 'Boris mode'

GoldenEye 007: Reloaded

Reloaded release or rushed refurb?

The Pitch

An FPS remade more
times than Madonna

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

EXPECTED RELEASE: 2012

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER: EUROCOM

PLAYERS: 1-16

In this era of the faceless, voiceless FPS protagonist, there's a certain coolness to be felt from becoming James Bond. Admittedly, Bond's approach doesn't alter your basic gameplay much; 007 fully embraces the one-man-army mentality that the shooter genre idolises.

The biggest difference is you're now an unstoppable collection of polygons who is sex on USB stick. Female NPCs will want to be with you, and male AI enemies will want to be you. And then there'll be a mixture of both who'll both want to be *and* be with you as well. Apply the day one patch if that's not your thing.

Bond himself is clearly a character with benefits but as

a gaming franchise his 007 brand hasn't always kept its tuxedo free of crud, nor its cummerbund out of the toilet.

One of the more heinous besmirchings was 2004's ex-crap-aganza, *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent*. The PlayStation faithful from that era will no doubt remember it for what it truly was; a mediocre, money-grubbing attempt by EA to ride the coattails of the N64's legendary first-party FPS, *GoldenEye*. Fast forward seven years and Activision is now in line to tantalise us with yet another knock-off of that title.

In all honesty, one's enthusiasm for *GoldenEye 007: Reloaded* curbs when you question its parentage. You're looking at a game that's effectively a remake of a 2010 Wii game which was a 're-imagining' a 1997 Nintendo 64 game. In comparative terms that sounds as

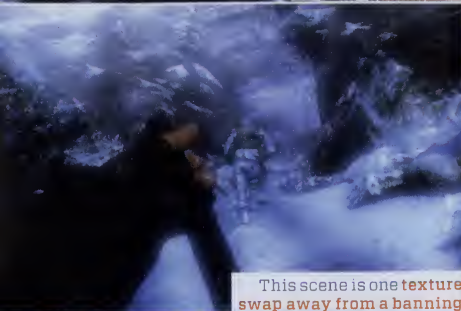
appealing as buying a Blu-ray movie of the DVD recording of a VHS tape; however, *GoldenEye 007* was surprisingly well received by many critics. Take that into account and this 60fps, high-definition, Move supported retelling of our favourite Bond film suddenly doesn't feel like the worst thing in the world.

For those of you unfamiliar with *Reloaded*'s 2010 source material, Pierce Brosnan's likeness has been given the heave-ho in favour of Daniel Craig's. Likewise, the whole of this retreaded tale now takes place after the Cold War and replaces the dirty commies with the (just as unwashed) Russian Federation.

There's a bizzaro world quasi-familiarity here. James Bond and Alec Trevelyan (played by Elliot Cowan, not Boromir) are on a mission infiltrating a chemical weapons facility in Arkhangelsk, Russia, which is believed to be the source of weapons used by a terrorist cell to target

"Female NPCs will want to be with you, and male AI enemies **will want to be you**. And then there'll be a mixture of both"

"Mic check: I dropped your earpiece in the toilet earlier" Nope, still sounds like crap, James

Eviltwin: **identified**This scene is one **texture swap** away from a **banning**This AK is **OK** with us

British embassies around the world. The mission still goes awry when Trevelyan is caught and not really shot by General Ourumov (Laurence Possa). As before, Bond must track Ourumov's dealings to his (not-so) mysterious boss, and thwart their plan to use an orbital EMP to get rich quick.

Aside from a few location changes, the broad strokes of this spy-fest won't surprise anybody who has worn out their 1997 VHS of *GoldenEye*. Even still, a healthy number of key details have been tweaked, the most notable of which is tone. *Reloaded* retells a lot of the action set piece moments in a way that dovetails with Daniel Craig's steely-eyed interpretation of the super spy.

Also, rather than just dropping this size six foot of a game into the size 12 boot of the PS3 architecture, Eurocom has wisely opted to construct a new engine for *Reloaded*. This ground up approach has forced them to rethink a lot of facets of the older code, particularly with texture replacement and geometry rebuilding.

Early reports suggest that the team is adding in new animations, particle and lighting effects and a serious upgrade on the enemy AI. Unlike the dead-men-walking dunderheads in the previous engine, these new goons will exhibit a form of squad hierarchy. Which, in Bond terms, means you can shatter mob mentality by meleeing their sergeant into a tank of ill-tempered, mutated sea bass.

Other noteworthy upgrades for this PS3 version include a Bond-style rehashing of *Modern Warfare 2*'s entertaining Special Ops mode. These side diversions are unimaginatively titled 'M16 Ops' and the gameplay they offer can be pigeon holed into one of four challenge types. Stealth missions require you to do exactly what you think you'll need to,

Red barrels: **never where you need them to be**Kevlar beanies were **all the rage** with **Bogan Ops**

but add in the nail biting element of a stopwatch. Elimination has you doing much the same thing, but with little care for how much noise you make. Wave Defence is yet another time-based challenge where Bond must collect multiple control points from baddies faster than he would STDs from the ladies. The last is Assault, but so far Eurocom is staying quieter than the real M16 as to this exact nature of this.

Moving on into the online space, multiplayer has had its max player count lifted to 16, and the unlock content has seen a similar upsizing as well. Eurocom is promising a slew of new weapons, more ways to customize your agent avatar and a number of match types not seen in *GoldenEye 007*. Keeping in line with the original *GoldenEye*'s proclivity for couch-based multiplayer antics, *Reloaded* will feature four-player split-screen adversarial as well. There are no details on whether this PS3 update will re-jig the existing levels to account for the extra players, or if it will include the 'original, original' multiplayer arenas from the N64 title. Given how the aforementioned were absent

from the 2010 release, we're not holding our breath at all.

It's important to note that while *Reloaded* boasts Move and Sharpshooter support, it is still very much designed with standard controllers in mind. Given that Eurocom is a part of the wider Activision family, it shouldn't come as a surprise to know that the control mechanics and general feel of the game heavily mimicks the more recent *Call of Duty* games. Unsurprisingly, 2010's *GoldenEye 007* was cobbled together using a modified version of both the IW engine and the game engine from Eurocom's own *Dead Space: Extraction*.

The more we study the *GoldenEye 007: Reloaded* plan, the more we see it as a golden opportunity for Eurocom to prove its next-gen chops. With luck the money men will give the team the time and resources needed to nurture this properly. We're 50/50 enthusiastic on this. Half of everything is luck. And the other half? Fate. **Adam Mathew**

They Say

"The team even brought in *GoldenEye* screenwriter Bruce Feirstein and composer David Arnold to help realise the (slightly) new approach"

We Say

Bruce's input would be a helluva lot more impressive if he wasn't also attached to *Blood Stone*. It was pretty damned derivative, even for a Bond title.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

Clearly he's using one of those
American-built motion trackers

Aliens: Colonial Marines

They're coming outta the goddamn walls

The Pitch

More marines + more
xenos = more epic

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

EXPECTED RELEASE: 2012

PUBLISHER: SEGA

DEVELOPER: GEARBOX

PLAYERS: 1-TBA

S tay frosty. Turn on any modern videogame featuring marines — space or otherwise — and you'll hear at least one grunt open his mouth and, well... *grunt* it. This ubiquitous temperature advice proves just how influential James Cameron's *Aliens* film has been to videogame shooters. It boggles the mind then to think that it's taken 25 years for us to hear the phrase dropped in its natural environment: a space colony overrun with an alien species whose life-cycle is a very thin subtext for rape.

Moving on to much more pleasant topics, *Aliens: Colonial Marines* may appear to be a straight up FPS bug hunt, but its gameplay is really something of a mixture. Gearbox Software is promising an amalgam of intense co-op, the occasional

bit of squad-based tactical shooting, a dash of survival horror and even some slower-paced exploration of the derelict remains of LV-426.

"But wait a sec, wasn't the complex liquefied in a 30-megaton nuclear blast at the end of *Aliens*?" you ask, quite perceptively. Gearbox is explaining that away by saying the climactic ground-based nuclear blast in *Aliens* left a cone-shaped crater (nukes are supposed to be detonated in mid-air, you see). That fact has left much of the Hadley's Hope colony, and the xenomorph hive, intact. Convinced? No, neither are we at this point, but we'll have to see if the game explains it more succinctly.

Either way, Randy Pitchford and his Gearbox team has been authorised

by Fox to forge the official canon that links *Aliens* to *Alien 3*. We're smelling contradictions with it already, but then again we haven't seen the full picture yet. According to Pitchford, "[hardcore fans] will be astonished to see how well it connects together and how true to the canon it is".

Whatever the case may be, this bridging story is shaping up to be one dream of a spiritual successor.

Colonial Marines' story focuses on the USS Sulaco, the battleship that witnessed the last stand of the Colonial marines' 2nd battalion, 9th regiment. After the ship has jettisoned Ripley's lifecraft onto Fury 161 the main vessel receives remote orders from Weyland Yutani to return to orbit above LV-426. By the time the space hulk limps its way back to the scene of the crime a second detachment of "backup marines" (the ones Hicks said would arrive within 17 days) shows up on the USS Sephora.

The nefarious powers that be have told this much, much larger squad of "ultimate badasses" to secure the 'probably-maybe-empty' Sulaco, to recon LV-426 and report any interesting findings. Nobody sends the troops a memo about the horny, face-humping E.T.s lying in wait for them. And you thought *your* employers were pricks.

As you probably would have guessed, the defecation hits the oscillation pretty hard. Very soon into the space-based skirmish the Sulaco is forced to make a very inelegant reentry into LV-426's atmosphere and onto the planet itself. Demoralised and extremely disorganized, the survivors of that express elevator to hell must regroup and find a way to survive. To do this they'll need to scavenge what ordinance they can from the derelict Sulaco and to shore up some sort of defense in what is left of the colony.



Nothing helped interspecies relations more like a ol' good power-hug

Moments later: "out comes a top hat and cane" "Hallooo, ma baby..."



According to Pitchford this 'last stand' represents Act 2. Apparently we may even be taken nearer to the alien spacecraft seen in the first movie.

From what has been shown so far, Gearbox is very much on track to recreate *Aliens'* powerful, claustrophobic sense of atmosphere. Many of the iconic sights and sounds are present. Shotguns for 'close encounters' are present and accounted for, as are panicking marines and the butt-tightening bleats of your Motion tracker.

Interestingly, the latter is no longer a fixed HUD element, nor can it be equipped in conjunction with a gun. Your options with it are: knowing the rough direction of where something is (but maybe not being able to quick draw fast enough to kill it). Or, you can hope to be looking the right way when the meat-shredding freaks spring up from just about anywhere (possibly from your own chest cavity).

The visuals certainly look "*Aliens* authentic", too. *Colonial Marines* uses a variant on the Unreal 3 engine, called Red Ring, which specialises in dynamic lighting and shadow rendering. This sort of calculated, on-the-fly shadowing, lighting and reflections are absolutely necessary for an atmospheric adventure set in the *Alien* universe. It's also good to see that the stygian, neon-lit nightmare of the colony isn't sullied by life or ammo HUD elements. One nervous glance at the side of your pulse rifle will be all it takes to see how many bullets you *don't* have left.

As we mentioned earlier, the standup shooting will often change gears into tense defense sections and the wave-based nature of these events should make for some unique challenges. Thanks to a nearly impervious enemy type (cheerfully named The Crusher), even the most successful bug hunt could



A day in the corps is like a day on the farm? Hope you've got life insurance, old MacDonald

"One nervous glance at the side of your pulse rifle will be all it takes to see how many bullets you don't have left"

require a tactical retreat behind some bulkhead doors. From there you'll need to form a perimeter and cover all points of ingress with sentry turrets and friendly AI. Presumably, this is where the four player drop-in co-op will come into its own. Gearbox has also done us proud by including two-player split-screen.

2010's *Aliens vs. Predator* was a misshapen beast that could have been much better. *Colonial Marines* is showing all the signs of being a labour of love that's based on one of the greatest action films of all time. What's more, the fan service contained within is reading of the chart.

The environments will be littered

with many a heartwarming head nod. Gearbox says we will be able to see where Vasquez and Gorman died, and maybe even kick about Bishop's legs. We may also find the fate of Burke and Hudson, but something tells us we're probably not going to live long enough to make that detour worth it.

Aliens: Colonial Marines is approaching quickly and should be the sort of game no serious shooter fan can afford to ignore. We're monitoring its progress on our motion tracker without too much nervousness at all. A day in this corps will be like a day on the farm. Let's rock. **Adam Mathew**

They Say

"There are so many neat, fun things we get to do. Like, what happened to Burke? What happened to Hudson?"

We Say

Stick to the canon Gearbox and our nerdgasm will shake the very mountains.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

It's Hammer, go Hammer, M.C. Hammer, yo Hammer and the rest can go an' play

Darksiders II

Fear the reaper, baby

The original *Darksiders* taught us that War was good for a lot more than absolutely nothin'. It's quite hard to be useless with a teleporting fire horse and a sword that eats chaos. On the other hand, *Darksiders II* hopes to teach us that Death is indeed the cure of all diseases. You need only take two scythes to the face and see your mortician if life persists.

As is evident from the escalation of Death dual-wielding his farm tools, Vigil Games is out to double up everything that rocked in the original. This means more puzzles, more to collect and more heads to roll. Sequels being sequels, we saw that design decision coming a mile away. What did catch us off guard is that *Darksiders II*'s plot doesn't pick up right after War settles the score.

Big brother Death takes centre stage this time and, like War, his tale starts as our world gets the bejesus belted out of it by the powers that be. For the most part, not much has changed. You'll still need to saddle up to explore the impressively crafted skeleton of human civilization, and this urban spelunking will earn you a series of hellacious powers.

According to Vigil we'll be able to more finely adjust how Death deals out... himself, thanks to customisable skill trees and modifiable attributes. Also, thanks to a new loot system that lets you rob demon corpses, nothing will be surer than Death and taxes. The seagulling of these many armour drops, along with the various upgrade paths, will effectively let you spec Death towards melee or magic.

The Pitch

War out, Death in

Info

PLATFORM: PS3

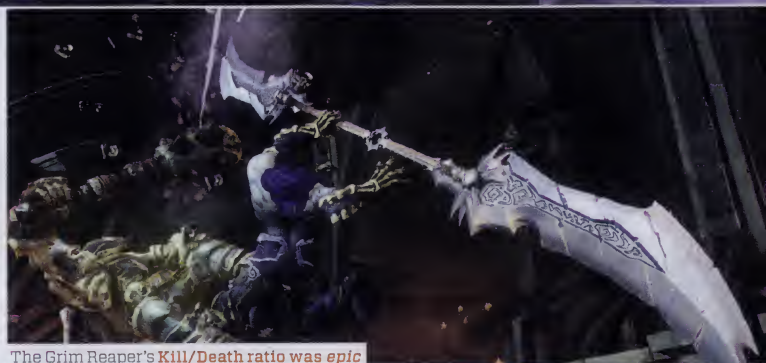
GENRE: ACTION RPG

EXPECTED: TBA 2012

PUBLISHER: THQ

DEVELOPER: VIGIL GAMES

PLAYERS: 1



The Grim Reaper's Kill/Death ratio was epic



I'm not going to lie to you, this won't hurt one single bit

The grim reaper conducts business quite differently to his angry-Santa-looking sibling. Vigil has drastically increased player movement speed, which will make for extremely speedy melee-based brawls that laugh in the face of gravity. These ninja combos, along with a series of backup gear items (and a hammer that'd turn Thor's pants into a lightning rod), will be needed in the colossal boss fights. You can also rely on a Ghost claw tool to be a "get over here" introduction-maker, as well as a traversal enabler.

You'll be thankful for its help, too. *Darksiders II* will contain four massive zones featuring unique art direction and varying environmental challenges. In terms of size, the first major zone will have as much dungeon content as the entirety of the first game. Vigil has also mentioned that as you slash and burn your way through these dungeons and city hubs you'll see cameos of the remaining two horsemen (Fury and Strife) in some capacity.

With brotherly reunions, bad arsed weapons and what sounds like three times the apocalypse to explore, *Darksiders II* is looking more and more like the type of sequel we'd play to death.

Adam Mathew

They Say

"We've taken the best parts of *Darksiders* and improved on them with a host of new mechanics and features"

We Say

Not becoming this harvester of sorrows sounds like the language of the mad.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING



It's horses for courses and corpses up in here

F1 2011

Formula 1™

GO COMPETE



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Nothing rhymes with purple, **class dismissed**

Saints Row: The Third

Open world mayhem or very, very silly

The Pitch

Guns, cars, sex jokes and stupid fun, captured on a disc

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

EXPECTED RELEASE:

NOVEMBER 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

DEVELOPER: VOLITION

PLAYERS: 1-2

Comparisons to *GTA IV* are as inevitable as they are outdated. While *Saints Row* has always been positioned as a competitor to the three-year-old, benchmark-setting open-world action adventurer, it hasn't done so by imitation. In place of satire and gradually introducing players to the game world, *Saints Row 2* stuffed you straight into the poo-flinging, naked-skydiving bedlam not long after booting up.

Saints Row The Third wants to make that a tradition, and in the absence of another *GTA* it's going to be the only contemporary choice for ripping up a city. Volition's reasoning for destruction is if you're going to go nuts you may as well do it as outrageously as possible. Equip an enormous, wobbling dildo and beat your enemy (or bystander) down with the quivering rubber phallus. Dress yourself up in a gorilla suit while the rest of your gang keep watch in superhero costumes. It definitely offers freedom of expression (though we think at the sometimes at the expense of context).

That's not to say there isn't a story. The titular Saints are no longer just a roughly shod gang. They're megastars in their hometown, and like rappers with a marketing plan they've become mainstream. However, a powerful Belgian arms dealer called Phillipe Loren has started a war with the Saints in the new city of Steelport with his own gang, the Syndicate, and the Saints are caught on the back foot after trying to rob one of Loren's banks. Knocking them unconscious and kidnapping them, Loren introduces himself to the Saints in his jet, asking them for two-thirds of their income – they tell him to shove it, breaking into a firefight and then opening up the cargo hold in the maelstrom.

Whilst freefalling you'll punch out falling Syndicate goons as you dodge cars and other debris, rescue a gang member Shaundi, ditch her, get back into the plane you just came from, then re-rescue Shaundi as you touch the ground.

In your turf war with Loren you'll have the chance to destroy skyscrapers or – worryingly

for the censors – capture a rival gang's boat of prostitutes, to either sell the boat back to them or keep the girls and pimp them out to drip-feed cash back into your pocket. Your actions aren't just for "lulz", as there's now a 'respect' system that works like XP, and also affects how people in the city react to you.

More respect means more opportunities to upgrade your weaponry and vehicles, and the improvements affect physical and behavioural qualities of the tools at hand. But then you'd expect that, and it's a sensible approach in a game that's anything but sensible. Each weapon allows you to target an opponent's genitals, though not necessarily with ballistics – you might end up separating the meat from the veg with the stock of your AK, or the blunt end of a pistol. Then there's the infamous motion from a teaser trailer of a man doing the splits and punching another man in the crotch.

What it lacks in sense it wants to make up in fun. And isn't that what you play videogames for? **Paul Taylor**

When THQ said this would feature Hummers **we expected wrong**



They Say

"Like a lapdance from a porn star, the action is naughty, fun, and better than anything you're getting at home"

We Say

It's definitely over the top and, like its predecessor, hopes to present a collection of the wildest stuff you can do in a videogame this side of *Just Cause 2*. We just hope it has the technical clout to make it happen.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE

NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING



Because no city was complete **without a Mike Haggart statue**

PLATINUM DOUBLE PACKS

Prepare For This Year's Blockbuster Sequels - Play The Originals

UNCHARTED



Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
+ Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

**RATCHET
& CLANK**



Ratchet & Clank: Tools of Destruction
+ Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time

RESISTANCE



Resistance: Fall of Man
+ Resistance 2

 **PS3**
PlayStation-3

SONY
make.believe

Gang-up tip is all fun and games until **somebody loses a sternum**



When it's three versus one, you'd best **know how to buckle your swash, son**



Dishonored

No, it's not a typo

The Pitch

The despair of *Half-Life 2* with all the freedom of *Deus Ex*, and the power-at-your-fingertips of *BioShock*

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA

2012

DISTRIBUTOR: BETHESDA

SOFTWARES

DEVELOPER: ARKANE

STUDIOS

PLAYERS: 1

We're not sure that's the right genre for *Dishonored*. Yeah, technically, it's a shooter because it's viewed in the first-person and you do shoot people. It's also an action-adventure title, with an RPG injection. Take the best bits of *BioShock*, *Half-Life 2*, *Deus Ex* and *Brink* and you're part of the way there.

Dishonored's being crafted by Harvey Smith (he had a creative role in the first *Deus Ex* and the PC game *Thief: Deadly Shadows*) and new-to-PlayStation Raf Colantonio (bloke behind *Dark Messiah of Might & Magic*), two men with extraordinary vision. Choice, freedom, and revenge are their driving principles.

Players take control of a man called Corvo, wrongfully imprisoned for killing the Empress. In his city of Dunwall most of the population are either dead or dying from a plague, and a corrupt Lord Regent wields power. You have a few otherworldly powers to help the resistance wrestle control back from the aristocracy, bestowed (or imposed) upon you by an entity called the Outsider, though you'll have to rely on your natural skills and observation to make it through the world.

Those powers are skewed more towards modern science fiction than old-school magic. While short-range teleportation, stopping or slowing down time, and possessing the body of an animal or another human being are just the beginning of your repertoire, you're also keenly athletic. Corvo can scurry up a rope or chain like a cat up a curtain, as well as double jumping, sprinting and sliding – accomplishing your task will draw on exploiting the environment to your needs. Pay attention to the surface you're jogging on as the sound of your feet crunching down could draw guards to your position.

That's old hat, of course. What is impressive is your enemies may not be as alert if they're talking directly to each other, and if you play it sneaky through the game you're going to draw less heat.

Your actions impact the greater world and the choices you get to make later on, as well as your immediate situation. Hack and slash your way through civilians and guards without blinking to the goal and an option that could've presented itself later won't be available. Thing is, you won't know you never had the opportunity, and that's rather exciting.

Balancing choice with a guiding hand is a struggle. Players crave freedom to do things just how they want, but if the journey to the end credits is too slack they may lose their direction and run out of momentum. Throttle the choices even just a touch too much and the game feels like a series of timed button presses without any emotional connection.

Dishonored is treading a fine line between letting players go nuts with a diverse set of tools, whilst keeping the world contained to ensure that they don't lose their way. It's not that you have multiple routes to the same goal, but that you make the route yourself. This is already making steady throb on our radar. **Paul Taylor**

They Say

"It's improvisational"

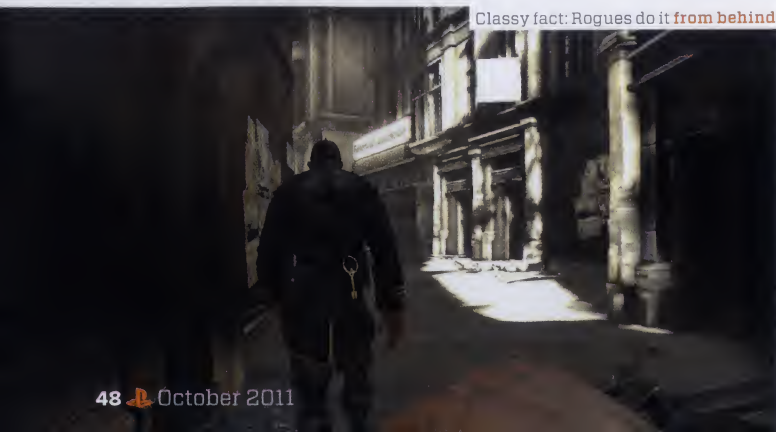
We Say

Where other games show you multiple paths and give you the chance to pick one, *Dishonored* shows you the start and the end. That bit in the middle is totally up to you.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

Classy fact: Rogues do it **from behind**



Also inbound



Journey

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ADVENTURE **EXPECTED RELEASE:** LATE 2011 **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
DEVELOPER: THATGAMECOMPANY **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA

Well, here's a neat experiment. Essentially a simple adventure in which players guide their spindly-legged characters across sand dunes to a huge mountain in the distance, *Journey* is basic enough for anyone to play yet will shatter your expectations of what usually comprises a videogame.

The HUD's gone and the instructions are minimal. You're expected to figure out where to go and what to do with the strange scraps of cloth that float in the air, and also how to exploit your powers.



F1 2011

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** RACING **EXPECTED RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 23 **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI
PARTNERS DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS **PLAYERS:** 1-16

F1 2011 is harder than a woodpecker's lips. There's a neat little sequence where, if you're retired from a race, your driver storms back into the garage, knocking the camera out of his face with his hand as he huffs past.

We saw that a lot.

The preview code we've been playing needs a bit of clean up work but the atmosphere's been cranked up a few notches and the sense of speed is off the chain. We doubt you'll be able to go back to *F1 2010* after this.



Star Trek

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE
EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA 2012 **DISTRIBUTOR:** TBA
DEVELOPER: DIGITAL EXTREMES **PLAYERS:** 1-2

Another movie tie-in, more baited breath. Exhale, slowly, though. Rather than spinning off from the source material this will fill in a story gap between the 2009 J.J. Abrams movie and the 2012 sequel.

Makes sense, we reckon, though canonical, silver screen purists might chew their fingernails over what they might miss out on. However, Riddick did it to no detriment. Synopsis? Spock and Kirk buddy up in a lens flare-heavy adventure that only relies on your ability to enjoy a good yarn. Set your phaser fingers to 'crossed'.



Far Cry 3

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** SHOOTER **EXPECTED RELEASE:** 2012 **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA

Ubisoft released a bunch of new screenshots at gamescom of its increasingly lush-looking shooter. There's a stark contrast between the shiny, high-contrast environments and guns, and the insane, murderous intent of this island's de facto rulers.

Insane bad-guy with a Mohawk hair, Voss, is further cementing himself as The Most Evil Guy on the Planet as executions and drowning are his modus operandi – we can already attest there hasn't been another game that sparks vengeance like this. Get ready to jungle boogie.



The Adventures of Tintin: The Game

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE
EXPECTED RELEASE: LATE 2011 **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTPELLIER **PLAYERS:** 1

While this Tintin title is being developed to coincide with the new Spielberg movie, it's a welcome change from the usual movie-game dross. In fact, it looks really, really good.

It's helped a lot by the gorgeous graphics and the gameplay that'll flex your brain, as you try to outsmart enemies rather than defeating them in direct confrontations. There's even co-op, and non-fans of the Belgian reporter should check this out.



FIFA 12

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** SPORTS **EXPECTED RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 29 **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA **DEVELOPER:** EA CANADA **PLAYERS:** 1-22

It's the same old tune. EA Canada has taken the world's best-selling sports game and spent 12 months making it better. And it *is* better.

FIFA 12 immediately feels different. The pace of *FIFA 12* is unlike *FIFA 11*; you're not just sprinting and sliding everywhere, you're playing around with speed. You're exploding in space and you're protecting the ball when cramped. You're containing players until play breaks down rather than running like a missile at anyone with the ball, because impacts matter. Thumbs way up.

Need for Speed The Run

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** RACING **EXPECTED RELEASE:** NOVEMBER 17 **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
DEVELOPER: BLACK BOX **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA

The Run is the first in *NFS*'s 17 year history that's actively trying to maintain a blockbuster persona, weaving together races and intense action-based set pieces. We love the premise – a race spanning over 4500 kilometres (with 300 actual kilometres of road) from San Francisco to New York City in a stack of hot cars. With a few hundred competitors, it's sobering seeing yourself claw up from 170-something to 160.

Cars, though, feel heavy and artificial, needing a good squeeze of the brake to sensibly make it round corners when you otherwise assume they'd drift like a cat on ice. It's definitely nothing like *Hot Pursuit* in terms of handling, but it's even less like *SHIFT*, leaving *The Run* as a strange, clunky hybrid.



Love is a

BATTLEFIELD

Cologne, Germany: 50° 56' 0" N / 6° 57' 0" E

17.08.11 23:48 Sender: Nathan Lawrence

Infiltrated Europe's largest gaming expo, gamescom.
Have spent the day with Battlefield 3.

Initial intelligence proving correct. Strength even
greater than expected.

Call of Duty doesn't know what's about to hit it.

Full report follows.

End transmission_■





"Are we shooting? Are we shooting people or what?"

It's been a few months since we checked the news reports from the frontline and a lot has happened since we last took a look at *Battlefield 3* through a 12x scope. An exclusive alpha testing phase has been and gone, the October release date has been blasted onto gaming calendars, and DICE has announced its September beta offensive.

We had hands-on time with some exclusive content from the game, and sat down with Karl Magnus Troedsson, general manager at DICE. We asked what PlayStation 3 owners can expect from the hotly anticipated first-person military shooter that EA believes has *Modern Warfare 3* defeated.

German efficiency

While America may be able to lay claim to the biggest and flashiest games event of the year, E3, the Germans have bragging rights over the most practical – gamescom – with a solid emphasis on hands-on time and intimate interviews with some of the big players.

DICE was, of course, present this year and had the honour of closing the 'day zero' EA conference with a bang. While certain other stage presentations were a bit 'meh' in their offering, *Battlefield 3* had the right amount of oomph to warrant a deserved acclamation from the hundreds of attendees. The all-new cooperative facet of the game was revealed – a unique offering by *Battlefield* standards and a different flavour to the Onslaught Mode DLC – much to the appreciation of the crowd. Best of all, it was played out live on the PlayStation 3 version of the multiplatform title.

A joint effort

Troedsson was joined onstage by Patrick Söderland, CEO of DICE, for the live play through of an infantry-focused map. The setup for the map was simple: a high-ranking officer in the PLR wants to leave the dark side and needs a Marine escort back to the green zone.

We confirmed later on in our interview with Karl Magnus that the cooperative mode is separate from the campaign and only offers support for two players. Anyone hoping to play through the squad-based campaign with their buddies should stop holding their breath now; alas, we have. Back on stage, Troedsson and Söderland got their war faces on before launching into the night-time mission.

Talk it up, boys

What became abundantly clear early on is how important it is to communicate with your teammate. As the DICE duo attempted to approach the initial section stealthily they were in a constant dialogue, planning their moves in a real-time chess fashion.

"Two guys on the left; I'll spot 'em. Three, two, one."

Shoot. Okay. Hang on, I'm gonna pick up the shotgun."

Troedsson took point, with his no-questions-asked boomstick, while Söderland covered his arse. The duo failed to take out a judging security camera that led to the abandonment of their attempt at playing it Sam Fisher-style. It was time to go loud.

Of all the impressive features of the co-op presentation, the one thing that shouts the loudest to be noticed is the weight of the shotgun. Every shot unleashed a glorious boom that dishes out a satisfying amount of short-range death certainty. It's a basic thing, but DICE continues to show how seriously it takes the sound and feel of its armaments, and it marches a long way to creating all-important player immersion.





Every shot
unleashed a
glorious boom

"You go this way, I'll go home"



"FFFFFFFUUUUUUUUU..."



Our turn

Less than 24 hours later and it was our turn to take the reins for the same cooperative level. Like feuding lovers, there was no conversation with our preselected co-op partner and, even though we'd seen the section played before, it emphasised the importance of same-page communication. He died, we died and each death highlighted the potential payoff when playing with a conversational buddy.

Our demo guide told us that the game was running on alpha code, but two things stood out as potential ugliness for the console iteration of *Battlefield 3*: stupid AI and an abundance of surprisingly bland textures. As Söderland had expressed his lack of care about enemy AI in the past, we sought Troedsson's perspective on the ugly textures.

The ugly truth

After we confess our concerns with the irregularity of bland textures next to attractive Frostbite 2 powered effects and sexy weapon models, Troedsson offers us his frank perspective.

"Game development nowadays is a lot about smoke and mirrors," he says. "So you have to look at

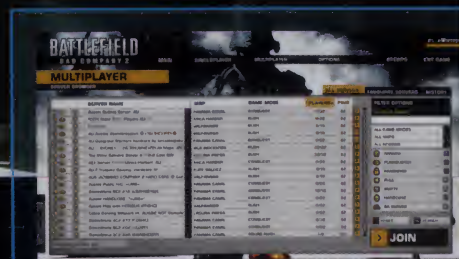
what's important for the player. What are they going to be looking at? Okay, the gun. They're gonna look at that all the time, so let's make some extra effort on that and make sure it looks really good. But we have some tricks up our sleeve when it comes to Frostbite 2 that we're now using. We can now stream in and out and have more things on screen at the same time; we can have high resolution stuff and then dump it out of memory."

"One of the key things that I actually strongly believe will make the console versions look really, really good compared to what we've done before is the dynamic lighting. That is still present on consoles, muzzle flashes will actually light up the environment."

Training grounds

We were curious as to how the cooperative play mode tied into the overall structure of the game. As it turns out, it's a bridge between single-player and the potentially daunting emphasis on competitive multiplayer.

"I feel that some people can be a bit overwhelmed when jumping into multiplayer and I'm this kind of player as well," says Troedsson. "I like to play the single-player campaign first and then move into multiplayer. If we can then have people playing single-player and then some co-op and then feel armed and ready, 'I know all the controls, I'm



^ Just browsing

To emphasise that DICE has a passion for its console audience, Troedsson explained an all-new addition that was the result of community requests: an in-game server browser.

"We are going to ship the game with a full server browser on console. That's something we've never done on a console before. We got this very loud and clear from the community, but they want to be able to handpick or really nit-pick which server they get into. Naturally, there will be a quick play option as well, but you will have more control over where you actually play."

Six cooperative levels [will] focus on the different combat facets of the game in both infantry and vehicular forms



"Damn it, don't go down on me, soldier! At least not out here, in this alley where everyone can watch"

really good at this, now I jump into multiplayer.' Then we have succeeded because then we have eased people into the experience."

Battlefield 3 is set to launch with six cooperative levels that focus on the different combat facets of the game in both infantry and vehicular forms.

"What we showed people here, at the press event, was an infantry focussed map with tight urban environments," says Troedsson. "But there's gonna be other co-op missions, for instance, where you or I could get into a helicopter together. I would be piloting and firing the main rockets, you would be the gunner with a 180-degree cannon and you could spot people and take them out and this kind of thing. So we have to complete the co-op mission like that."

Platform love

After experiencing a new 64-player Conquest map on the PC version of *Battlefield 3* (it maxes out at 24-player multiplayer on consoles) and bathing in the subsequent prettiness, it was difficult to shake the feeling that the PlayStation 3 iteration of the game wasn't receiving the right amount of love.

Troedsson is quick to address this concern.

"We are very dedicated to ensuring that none of the versions of the game are actually a port of another one," he says. "So we're looking at the PlayStation 3 and the Xbox 360 and saying, 'Okay, what can we do best with these consoles?'"

"It's hard, basically, just from a time perspective. We've had so many people just working on it, so that's one of the challenges. The good thing is that we have done several PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 games in a row, so we have a lot of experience and developers who really know and specialise on the PlayStation 3, for instance. So they can go in and they can look at, 'Okay, we have this on the PC. How do we get that to fit into the memory of the PlayStation 3, etcetera.' And naturally the PCs are more powerful, but I strongly believe that the PlayStation 3 is going to look absolutely amazing."

Borderland security

The new playable Conquest map on offer was called Caspian Border, a long-range and open map that favours vehicles and snipers. Interestingly, because



Trousers, soiled

of the open level design, destruction possibilities were reduced to demountable buildings, trees and those flimsily-made wire fences that can be destroyed with a single knife swipe. *Battlefield 3* handles exactly like *Bad Company 2*, and in no way is that a bad thing. While the vehicles – both ground-based and aerial – had obvious dominating potential on this map, we spent most of our time on foot, getting caught up in some seriously intense shootouts.

We were initially concerned at how well aerial vehicles would work on a 64-player map that's been shrunk down to a 24-player-friendly size for consoles, but Troedsson was eager to assuage our fears.

"There is an area of operations where infantry and vehicles can move around; the jets and the helicopters have a bigger environment that they can roam in," he says. "They can fly out, make a turn and then make a pass."



The new suppression mechanic is only the beginning of the range of clever little touches

"Cool. Pizza's here"



^ Single-player secrets

Even though the gaming world's introduction to *Battlefield 3* was via the single-player campaign, DICE is still staying mum on the specifics. So far, we've pieced together that you'll change character perspectives at least three times, and Troedsson had this cryptic addition.

"We haven't announced too much about the single-player just yet, but I think when people play it, a lot of people will see that there are a lot of modern-day shooters, but we have a different take on storytelling and tempo and dramatic curves and how we present characters and these kinds of things."

Caspian Border is clearly targeting future aces and will be an obvious favourite for any budding flyboys with egos writing cheques their bodies can't cash.

A touch of class

All *Bad Company 2* classes make a return in one form or another, with the major exception being that the basic soldiers have swapped their ammo packs for defibrillators and the heavy machinegun-loving medic has picked up the dropped ammo packs. This is a minor change that is initially jarring for *Bad Company 2* veterans but makes perfect sense after you get past the initial shock. It makes more sense for the support class to carry and distribute ammunition when they use weapon types that chew through hundreds of bullets. In fact, *Battlefield 3* encourages support players to be trigger happy thanks to the new suppression mechanic that makes it difficult for enemies to accurately return fire and rewards you with suppression points.

The little things

The new suppression mechanic is only the beginning of the range of clever little touches that help *Battlefield 3* to set itself apart. Vehicles are disabled before they explode, giving the occupants a chance to escape explosive demises; red dot-happy players have their ease-of-aiming balanced out by a red indicator that gives away their position when targeting an enemy's head; and engineers can equip torches to temporarily blind enemies during frontal assaults. One of the more refreshing updates to the levelling system used in *Bad Company 2* is the inclusion of genuine incentives to rank up.

"At about rank 25 in *Bad Company 2*, it just went ▶



"Walter, just stand outside so Chief can translate my Iraqi ass map, okay?"

"DONK" and stopped," says Troedsson. "That was one of the things we were all very unhappy with. So we've made a very conscious effort now with a persistent system in *Battlefield 3* to change that. So there's gonna be a whole lot more things to unlock throughout the full persistence of the game."

Your chaff has flare

While infantry levelling was part and parcel with *Bad Company 2*'s online component, *Battlefield 3* is set to include more than just weapon unlocks.

"Levelling up will give you access to optics, different attachments for the weapons, laser sights, gadgets, weapon systems on vehicles, there are so many things in the game," says Troedsson.

On the topic of vehicles, the *Battlefield* debut of jets on consoles is complemented with a range of upgrades; and not just the passive variety (a la, *Bad Company 2*). You'll be able to unlock advanced weapons tracking systems, countermeasures and a whole lot more as you prove your worth in the skies.

Keeping it real (or close enough)

There seems to be a real emphasis on realism, particularly with physicality and movement, so how does DICE balance realism with the fun?

"It's a very thin line to walk," says Troedsson. "Actually, our goal isn't to create realism. The word we have up on the wall is 'authenticity'. Because it's about what you perceive as being real; this is how I perceive sitting inside an Abrahams tank or whatever. It doesn't have to be exactly like the real.

"To us there's a difference between those words. To us we're not creating a simulator, we're creating a fun game. We're not creating a realistic game, we're creating an authentic game that is fun to play. So that is very important for us, an example. We can't have the jets fly at proper jet speed. That would mean ZOOM and they're gone. And they would just drop laser-guided bombs and everyone would die immediately. That would break all the fun. So we have to slow them down to unrealistic speed levels to make the whole system work; the whole rock, paper, scissors design system that we have."

The war of the 3s

Battlefield 3 and *Modern Warfare 3* are going head to head before the year is out; we ask for Troedsson's thoughts on the Activision dig at *Battlefield 3* for its 30 frames per second rate on consoles. He's more than willing to oblige.

"First and foremost, it's not a technical problem," he says. "We could easily make a 60fps game with Frostbite 2. But we are putting priorities on scale, large maps, destruction, vehicles and 24 players on console. We do so much more than what they [*Call of Duty*] are doing. And in our mind, 30fps suits us very well. We have a slightly slower pace, which fits this as well. Our game is a little bit less twitchy, which also fits that 30fps."




Switching to guns



So how closely does DICE analyse the competition? Are there any sorts of things DICE has learnt from them and said, 'Okay, they've done that better and we do that better than them.'?

"They do a lot of good things," says Troedsson. "But we don't break it down and say we're going to copy that feature. And I bet you they don't do the same with our game as well. We are proud, they're proud, we're all focussing on making our experience from that point of view."

With less than two months to go before we get to see EA put its money where its mouth is with *Battlefield 3*, the game is shaping up to be a contender for the first-person shooter crown. Hopefully it's not too late for a bit of spit and polish in the visuals department and perhaps even some new brains for the Scarecrow-esque AI. If these two concerns can be addressed, DICE will be offering up an attractive shooter proposition that may well be high impossible to ignore. 



^ Need for Battlefield

Interestingly, Need for Speed The Run is running on the same engine powering Battlefield 3: Frostbite 2. We ask Troedsson if there was any crossover and collaboration between the two vastly different titles.

"We have a separate team at DICE that develops Frostbite 2," he says. "They're helping out with our game and the Need for Speed game. We also have contact between the different game teams that do this. So maybe they create an update to the physics engine because they're so focussed on the cars; that is something that we can then reintegrate into Battlefield if we want to do something like that. And this goes for all the titles that are using Frostbite, and it's a very good thing and very interesting to see how that can evolve all titles powered by Frostbite 2."

There seems to be a real emphasis on realism, particularly with physicality and movement





The end of **TRIPLE-A GAMES**

The games we play and the way they're made is changing. Notable studios are closing down while mobile gaming and Facebook titles are increasing in popularity – and making a lot of money.

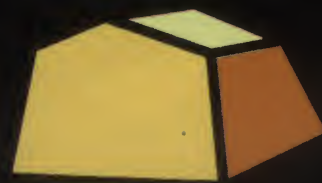
How is gaming going to change?

Why should studios plunge into developing high-risk titles if customers are content playing games that cost \$2 or nothing at all?

Will the games you and we traditionally love and play still be made?

**What does this mean for
the future of PlayStation?**

Words: Paul Taylor





Face it: the gaming landscape is changing. Studios are under increasing pressure to deliver triple-A games that are going to score in the high 80s and above on Metacritic and, crucially, generate sales to ensure their franchise continues. There's a lot of risk involved when millions of dollars are being spent, and publishers are nervously pulling at their collective collars as they monitor sales to see if they're going to get a

wallet-fattening return on their investment. Nor are they afraid to can projects or shut down studios that are perceived to be under performing. Activision cancelled production on *True Crime: Hong Kong* back in February (it's since been picked up by Square Enix, see page 11 for more) as, in the words of Publishing CEO Eric Hirshberg, "in an industry where only the best games in each category are flourishing, to be blunt, it just wasn't going to be good enough." The

publisher also closed Bizarre Creations, who only produced two games, *Blur* and *James Bond 007: Bloodstone*, after Activision bought them.

THQ's latest *Red Faction* title, *Red Faction: Armageddon*, suffered disappointing sales, and the franchise has been shelved along with the *MX vs. ATV* series. *MX vs. ATV Alive* sold less than 100,000 copies in its first 10 weeks on sale around the world, and along with mediocre review scores prompted Brain Farrell, the publisher's CEO, to say in a press release that THQ will "concentrate on fast growing digital business initiatives such as social games, mobile and tablet-based digital entertainment." Specifically, this means Facebook games and mobile games on Android and iOS.

Such an approach makes fiscal sense: mobile and games and games on Facebook are enjoying enormous growth. Facebook title *CityVille* by Zynga has sat on the top of the charts for over six months, attracting roughly 80 million players every month. Infamous mobile app *Angry Birds* has sold over 100 million copies, netting a revenue of approximately US\$70million since its initial release in December 2009. It only cost US\$140,000 to make. Compare that to *Modern Warfare 2* launched in November 2009, has raked in over \$1 billion. That game is a juggernaut, backed by a massive marketing campaign, support in the press and countless opinion pieces. *Assassin's Creed II*, on sale around the same time period, has shifted roughly 9 million copies worldwide.

EA, a company with a swag of genres and franchises in its stable, also see merit in the mobile market, having recently bought development studios PopCap and Firemint. PopCap has a string of hits to its name, including *Plants Vs. Zombies*, *Bejeweled*, *Zuma* and *Peggle*. Even if





you've never played these games, you've heard of them. According to data supplied to us from PopCap, they've sold over 50 million copies of *Bejeweled* across all platforms, generating US\$350 million.

Firemint, an Australian studio based in Melbourne, are the creators of *Flight Control* and *Real Racing*. They stated on their blog earlier this year that they have sold more than 3.8 million copies of *Flight Control* on iOS from March 2009 to January 2011. Such massive numbers from both of these developers is evidently very attractive to a publisher, and it demonstrates that the studios know how to create content that's going to sell.

In an interview with *Gamasutra*, Barry Cottle, executive VP of Electronic Arts Interactive (EAI), said "there are shops out there we see where the motivations align and there's a great cultural fit, and Firemint was one of those for us. It brings that creative talent – and particularly, that kind of mobile-centric talent, so we can begin to develop our brands in the marketplace." EA also bought Chillingo,

the company who published *Angry Birds* and *Cut the Rope* – another clear sign that EA is serious about making a dent in the mobile market.

"Mobile games are already evolving," says PopCap's Senior Director of Product and Business Strategy – Mobile, Giordano Contestabile. "What we are seeing right now in the market gives a good indicator of what's to come. At a very high level, the trends that are succeeding in reshaping the mobile games landscape (and the games industry as a whole) all involve making games more accessible and more easily enjoyable by a wider audience. I'd say that, overall, the major shift that's being driven by mobile gaming is the fact that we're going from an addressable base of maybe 100 million players (the "core" market, now a niche), to one that's several times the size and should soon reach 1 billion users in size, based on smartphone sales volume projections."

There's more. Mike Capps, the president of Epic Games is questioning the future of home consoles entirely after

the next generation. The *Bulletstorm* and middleware developer is more concerned with the sheer power of mobile handsets than successive generations of home consoles. Speaking to *Gamespot*, Capps said, "you see [Epic Games] experimenting some in the mobile space, partially because that's where the developer base is moving to. It used to be [developers] just wanted an iPhone port, and now they just want an iPad SKU as their main SKU, and we're adapting our technology to meet those needs. We're definitely experimenting in those spaces, and we'll be doing some interesting things in spaces other than pure HD AAA console gaming."

In a subsequent discussion with *Industry Gamers*, Capps said "look at the ridiculous acceleration of [mobile] hardware and technology...If you watch where the gamers are going that's where they are [playing games on mobile devices]... Your iPhone 8 will probably plug into your TV, or better yet, wirelessly connect to your television set to give you ▶

In 10 years, the notion of buying a separate, expensive device to play video games on your TV might seem as antiquated and pointless as the idea of buying a PDA is today. **GIORDANO CONTESTABILE**

Why would a traditional gamer suddenly completely switch to smartphone gaming, never to return?

ANTONY DOUGLAS

that big screen gaming experience with good sound. So really, what's the point of those next-gen consoles?"

Contestabile shares Capp's view on this. "In 10 years, the notion of buying a separate, expensive device to play video games on your TV might seem as antiquated and pointless as the idea of buying a PDA is today [versus a smartphone]," he said. "Videogames may well exist as channels on your TV, or as services you subscribe to that you can access on any number of personal devices: your phone, your tablet, your laptop, your television."

It's a substantial shift. Yet there's also plenty of evidence from developers, publishers and other industry heavyweights who say we're in no danger of never playing another blockbuster on our home consoles.

For one, the experience of playing a game on a handset compared to a flat screen just isn't the same. Changing the way you play games requires a fundamental shift beyond the convenience of having a smartphone in your pocket – and we, as gamers, know what we like.

"This all assumes that one market is eating into the other," says *Game Informer* editor Chris Stead. "I am not so sure there's any big crossover. People who may have never picked up a controller, regardless of how rad *Uncharted* is, no doubt make up the bulk of the mobile and casual market – so it's just more people, not less of some and more of another."

"Why would a traditional gamer suddenly completely switch to smartphone gaming, never to return?" questions Antony Douglas, Square-Enix Europe Digital Sales Director. "That, to

me, makes little sense. Their time might be spent playing games across wider platforms but the love of big screen gaming doesn't just disappear – do people suddenly stop loving movies overnight and only ever decide to just watch TV?"

Fergus Urquhart, CEO of Obsidian Entertainment, shares the sentiment. "I think about what people said the impact of DVDs would be on the movies. [The assumption was] that people would stop going to movie theatres and only watch things on DVD in their homes. That certainly didn't happen and movies in the theatres [generate more box office revenue] now than they did when DVDs first came out. This relates to games in that, I think, we all like the big events – the release of the next *Transformers* movie, the next *Harry Potter*, etc., so why shouldn't the game industry have those same sorts of things? It should and, in my mind, that is the release of the next *Elder Scrolls*, *Mass Effect* or *Call of Duty*."

"But, that is not to say that people are gaming in different ways. A tonne of people now play on Facebook, Android and iOS. However, those people are not necessarily the traditional gamers, who will still go out and pay US\$60 for the next great gaming event. In other words, the people who play and buy games has grown and fractured. Some of them sit in the middle, like me, and will play a game on any platform, while others (the more casual gamers) are often tied to a specific platform."

Douglas agrees, "Fundamentally, more people playing more games is a good thing for our industry. Plenty of core gamers will play casual titles on smartphones and browser but that doesn't

Who do you think you are?

There are a number of mobile and online developers that are on their way to being the next EA, Ubisoft or Activision. Here's just a brief shortlist.



Gameloft

The French-based company has made games for multiple console platforms, though its strengths lie in mobile games for iOS and Android. Its sales for the first half of 2011 are up 15 per cent to €76.8 million compared to last year, and they've adapted *Assassin's Creed* for mobile platforms. It sold its 200 millionth game on the App store in June, and have plans to release over 20 games over the rest of this year.



PopCap

Initially publishing its games on PC, PopCap's games also appear on mobile platforms and console. While it didn't supply us with mobile-only data, a copy of *Bejeweled* is sold every 4.3 seconds. Sales for *Plants vs. Zombies* hovers around 10 million units and *Zuma* has been sold more than 20 million units. *Peggle* has shifted more than seven to nine million units. These figures encompass all platforms combined.

mean they'll stop playing console titles, but they may buy less. Our industry challenge is to ensure that the high end demands of this audience is met with truly great gaming experiences... there is no room for filler in the market anymore."

What of the appeal in the price point of mobile games? Glancing over the various smartphone marketplaces shows a glut of games that sell for around US\$1 to provide entertainment.

"Are people playing these games, or just buying them?" asks Stead. "For \$1 you will buy something and use it once, or maybe not even use it at all, and think, 'whatever.' I paid for *Angry Birds*, for example, and contributed to its 100m global sales. I played it for about five minutes on the bus once and then I never turned it on again. The reality being that when I was in my house, I played my console. So I don't think the \$1 game market is very sticky, I don't care about the brands on it, and I don't commit any serious time to it. It's the Gobstopper effect – sweet at first, then it just sucks."

As we've seen above, sentiment for big releases and console games is still strong. Activision, the world's biggest publisher, are still steaming ahead with triple-A, core console titles. They're not about to invest in games that you can find on Facebook. Activision Publishing CEO Eric Hirshberg said that *Call of Duty*

players pay more to play online than any Facebook title. He also said "they're also more engaged - the percentage of *Call of Duty*'s monthly unique players that play the game every day is higher than that of the top three Facebook games."

Ultimately, well-produced games will always be appreciated.

"The market shows that quality games will sell handsomely if marketed and positioned quickly," confirms Stead. "Even relatively new IPs like *Red Dead Redemption* and *Assassin's Creed* have passed the magic 10 million sales mark in recent times, proving that the experience of a AAA, couch-bound game has an eager consumer base. It's a desirable space in which to have your brand."



It's the Gobstopper effect – sweet at first, then it just sucks. **CHRIS STEAD**



ROVIO

Rovio

Formed in 2003 by a trio of university students from Aalto University School of Science and Technology in Helsinki, this is the company behind *Angry Birds*, a game where you flick avian missiles at pigs. Originally appearing on iOS, it's been coded for multiple mobile platforms and is also on the PSN. *Angry Birds* has transcended the gaming space, spawning its own range of merchandise.

zynga

Zynga

With its headquarters in San Francisco the developer has opened offices all over the world. Zynga generate most of its business through Facebook, implementing pay-as-you-go credits for its games. The company has received funding from Google, and is currently valued somewhere between US\$15 - \$20billion. Rumours suggest Jeff Karp, the vice president of EA's casual division, is joining Zynga.



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SONY
make.believe

A character in a military-style uniform, including a black hat with a gold emblem and a black jacket with a gold braided strap, is shown from the waist up. The character is wearing black gloves and is interacting with a laptop. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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in review



GAME OF THE MONTH

Driver: San Francisco

Are you going to San Francisco?

Review ratings

- 10 Incredible:** Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.
- 9 Excellent:** An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.
- 8 Great:** Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.
- 7 Good:** A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.
- 6 Decent:** This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.
- 5 Mediocre:** A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.
- 4 Poor:** Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.
- 3 Very disappointing:** Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.
- 2 Terrible:** Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.
- 1 The worst:** Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. *OPS* has handed out this score only once.

This Month

68 Driver: San Francisco

74 Deus Ex: Human Revolution

78 Bodycount

80 Call of Juarez: The Cartel

82 Air Conflicts: Secret Wars



▲ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.



**Play this
if you like**

*Driver, Midnight Club:
Los Angeles*

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: DRIVING

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT

REFLECTIONS

PLAYERS: 1-8

RRP: \$109.95

Driver: San Francisco

Faster than a speeding Bullitt?

The *Driver* series may have been the franchise that kicked 3D car chases in the guts but it's languished beneath the shadow of an all-conquering open-world peer for almost a decade. With *Driver: San Francisco* Reflections has finally solved this problem.

It's simple really. Instead of making it more like *GTA* the developer has made it more like the original *Driver* instead. The result is fast cars, funk music, and no f—king walking around.

The result is a game that's once again unique amongst its four-wheeled competitors. A game that's more like *Midnight Club* than *GTA*, but different still.

Driver: San Francisco's ace-in-the-hole, of course, is its bizarre shift mechanic.

We've written about this game at length already so you should know by now that the bulk of the game takes place inside Tanner's head, deep in a coma dream after an accident at the beginning of the game pursuing arch-nemesis Jericho. From the moment we heard the concept we were sceptical. Indeed, until halfway through the game we remained cagey about it. There was a point in the game, however, where it finally goes from weird to clever. *Inception* this is not – but things do get satisfyingly quirky before they're resolved.

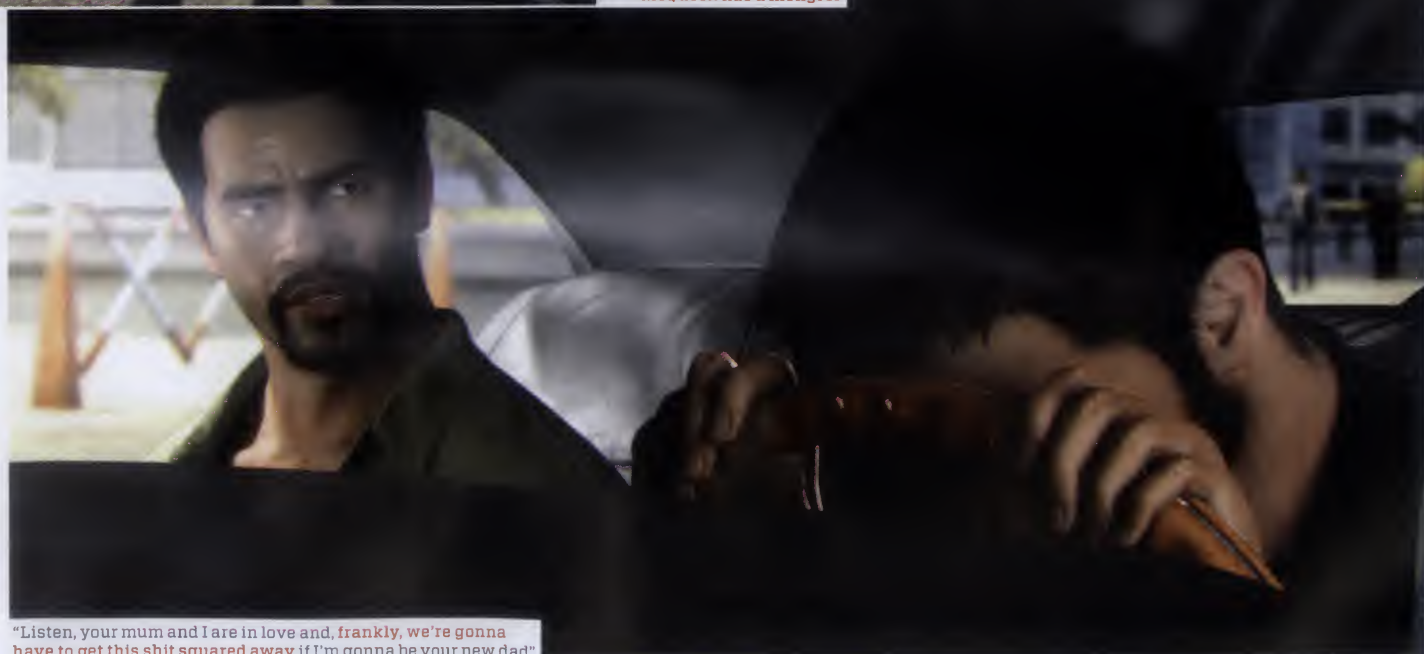
What shift does, however, is let you play this action-driving/racing game like no other. Say you find yourself in a race, for instance. The car you begin the race in needs to cross the line

first, but that doesn't mean you have to drive it there. With shift you can let the CPU take over your car and instead teleport into oncoming traffic to try and knock out the other competitors. Knock them all out and you'll win by default.

Shift, unless disabled for specific challenge purposes, changes the way you play entirely. One mission required us to shift around the city looking for low cars to drive under articulated trucks in order to defuse the bombs underneath. One mission even required us to drive Tanner's car remotely while we chased it in another car.

It's not a gimmick, it's built into the very fabric of the game. There are the pursuits where you can possess multiple cops pursuing the one target. There are team races where you need to alternate between two cars and have them finish first and second (or just knock out the other two racers, which is actually easier). There's even a tower defence style game that has you using random traffic to ram enemy cars off the road heading towards a static target.

Tanner may be the star but the cars here take centre stage. For the first time in the series the vehicles are fully licensed and Reflections has filled this digital garage with a mix of heritage metal, as made famous by cinema's most classic car chases, and today's most desirable supercars. The cars are lavished with attention and, in fact, we can't decide which view we like best. The chase cam lets you gaze upon the gleaming bodywork and soak up the plumes of tyre smoke wafting from the rear. The cabin view gives you a first hand glimpse of Tanner's incredibly well animated hands (see 'Handy man') and lets you appreciate above-and-



"Listen, your mum and I are in love and, frankly, we're gonna have to get this shit squared away if I'm gonna be your new dad"



Make like a banana

Splitscreen multiplayer is a hugely welcome feature in *Driver: San Francisco* and works a treat. There are competitive modes, co-operative modes and also a free ride option. The Tag game mode, perhaps the best online multiplayer mode, doesn't quite work as well with just two players (each can more easily see what the other is doing and it's too easy to camp in an alley with no cars in it for the chasing player to shift into) but Trailblazer is a blast. The co-op modes are good too, particularly the one where both players must escape the cops through a series of checkpoints and vehicle types are changed each time the players reach a set number of checkpoints.

beyond details like the shaker scoop on Tanner's Challenger, or working hood cowl (or 'flappers') on the game's '70 Chevelle SS and Hudson Hornet, or even the fully-operational bonnet-mounted tachometer on the '70 Pontiac GTO Judge.

Reflections does well to spool the cars out depending on how common they are. There are a few overused car types, like the Aston Martin Cygnet, but even after two weeks of play there were some cars, like the DeLorean DMC-12 or Lamborghini Miura, that remained as

rare as rockinghorse shit. What it means is that you'll never need to whip through an intersection dodging a dozen E-Type Jags.

Of course, you can purchase and store even the rarest cars for your own use

Pictured: the car that saved Jeff Goldblum from a Tyrannosaurus



once you've bought the requisite garage(s) and completed any necessary challenges, but it's nice not to see a convoy of McLaren F1s streaming around the streets at any given time.

A horde of sweet rides would mean squat if the handling was bunk, but the handling has been honed to perfection. The way you can keep a car poised on the edge of control, billowing smoke, through impossibly long powerslides. The crunch and bounce of a car landing from a hill launch. The weight of the nose whipping around in a reverse 180. It's top shelf.

By the numbers *Driver: San Francisco* is a pulsing wad of tightly packed excellence. In a year where, more than ever, gamers have been particularly vocal about anorexic games that can be milked dry in a single sitting, this is a game of impressive girth. It's a veritable runaway Triceratops of content that'll impale you with not only its single-player campaign but its offline splitscreen multiplayer and online multiplayer too.

There are 16 Tanner Missions, spread across eight chapters, where you play as Tanner himself and 28 other City Missions (where you play as Tanner helping people in the city to achieve their various personal aims). There are 31 Challenges with pre-defined vehicles and no shift (these include 13 Movie Challenges and boast worldwide

online leaderboards). There are 50 Activities, non story-based missions broken into three categories: race, action and stunt. There are 80 Dares, one-off tests of skill rewarding insane moves behind the wheel. Then there are the host of multiplayer modes, online and offline. We waxed glowingly on these last issue and will bring you our final impressions once the public are on board and playing it post-release.

Then there are the 120+ vehicles, which is more than most dedicated racing games. Over 50 of them can be on screen at any one time. No game has better recreated a freeway dense with cars than *Driver: San Francisco*. Picture the scene in *Ronin* where the cars are weaving through thick oncoming traffic. It's white-knuckle stuff.

There's the 210 miles of road carving through a city of over 13,000 unique models.

And all at 60 frames per second.

The list of things we took issue with is short. Having a DRV SF numberplate on cars for publicity art and such is cute but it looks a bit daft in-game when every single car has the same numberplate. Don't look too closely at the rear-view and wing mirrors either;





A Dodge: a great car to drive on the sidewalk

oddly enough Reflections cheats a bit with its actual reflections and you won't accurately see what's behind you.

The ability to completely turn off the HUD was an option we couldn't find; we'd have liked to be able to cruise around without all the on-screen paraphernalia now and then.

Fire and flame effects are a bit lacklustre but explosions are only used sparingly throughout the game. Pedestrians are a little on the simple side too and they'll clip through vehicles if they can't dive out of the way in time. Like *Driver* games of yore, *Driver: San Francisco* is not *Carmageddon*; running down pedestrians would be at odds with the game's attitude. Series creator Martin Edmondson also confirmed with us car manufacturers wouldn't cop it anyway.

The Power Ups (boost and shunt) are exceptionally handy but we never bothered to upgrade them beyond their initial effectiveness yet still finished the game. Things probably could've been a little tougher at times, but there is a bonus recreation of The President's Run mission from the first *Driver* (plus something else special: see page 86) to keep masochists busy.

Probably the biggest criticism we can level at *Driver: San Francisco* is the city itself. The game world is built for speed first and looks second. We wouldn't call it bare, but it is plain in parts. It's a world that's designed to

**"By the numbers
Driver: San Francisco is a pulsing wad
of tightly packed excellence"**



"Kids, you noticing all this plight?"
"gunshot, screams" "Roll 'em up"



Hitler's people's car, in Gestapo Black



All this screen is missing is a white stripe and two men carrying a plate of glass across the street

Handy man

Driver: San Francisco's cool factor is multiplied considerably by its great dashboard view, specifically by the way Tanner manhandles the wheel and interacts with the elements like horns and shifters.



With a dab of handbrake to get the tail wagging Tanner drifts through corners, countersteering through them by winding the wheel around with his palm.



A stab of L3 and Tanner will blast the horn. His hand will hover over it for a beat when you lift off so, when you sound it multiple times, Tanner's hand doesn't flicker unrealistically.



Slam it in reverse and Tanner will again control the wheel with the palm of his hand. Performing reverse 180s like this will blow a woman's clothes right off.



Hop in a car with a column shift gearbox and Tanner will use it properly, as pictured in this '83 GMC Vandura (made famous by *The A-Team*).



Covering all eventualities the team at Reflections has also ensured Tanner knows how to use flappy paddles too; Tanner subtly plucks next gear with a twitch of his fingertips in this Zonda Cinque.



Big air and a hard landing will wrench the wheel from Tanner's hands. With San Fran's famous hills, big air and hard landings are a regular occurrence.



Elvis owned over 100 Cadillacs in his lifetime, because Elvis was a goddamn pimp



"Ooooo, I love this song. Gotta have my bowl, gotta have cereal..."



What Hollywood do

Collect 120 in-game collectibles and you'll unlock a series of Hollywood-flavoured challenges inspired by classic TV & movie chases. 'Bite the Bullet', for instance, puts you in a green '68 Mustang and has you chasing down a black Dodge Charger, just like the Steve McQueen classic *Bullitt*. 'White Stripe' plonks you in a bright red Gran Torino and has you pursuing a stoolie driving an El Camino in a *Starsky & Hutch* tribute. There nods to a bunch of other films and shows too, including *The Driver*, *Gone in Sixty Seconds*, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, *Vanishing Point*, *The Blues Brothers*, *The Cannonball Run*, *The French Connection* and more. A grainy visual filter, complete with artificial film artefacts, gives each level a great cinema-style look and limiting the traffic to cars of (near enough) the correct era keeps things feeling legit.

be seen while whipping past it at high speed, not scrutinised. Art director Mike Haynes recently told an audience at GDC Europe 2011 that dropping to 30 frames per second would have allowed the team to double its budget for adding detail to the game world. Perhaps then we could've seen a city richer in nuance, like *L.A. Noire*'s Los Angeles (which is capped at 30 frames per second). It's worth noting, however, that *L.A. Noire*'s Los Angeles is a city designed to be explored on foot. *Driver: San Francisco*'s City by the Bay is not.

Other likely victims of the 60 frames per second commitment appear to be weather effects and a day/night cycle. It's a slight shame considering some of our favourite missions of *Driver* games past were set during night, or in heavy rain.

It also would've been nice to see a few more common, older, non-performance vehicles added. Car manufacturers can be bullish to deal with but we feel a few more regular '80s and '90s American sedans would've bridged the gap between the game's range of classic muscle and pony cars and its contemporary boutique exotics. There aren't really enough 'everyday' cars on the road. We wouldn't have especially cared which ones – just any of those big, boxy bastards from the kinds of cop movies we watched as kids, like *Die Hard With a Vengeance* or the early *Lethal Weapon* flicks.

We're picking nits here, however. None of these foibles detract greatly from what *Driver: San Francisco* does well.

If you've ever wanted to drive through a chain link fence. If you've ever accelerated towards a speedhump instead of slowing down for it. If you've ever thought going through a corner sideways would look a hell of a lot cooler than bumbling through it like a normal schmuck. If you've ever sprung a partial over the kind of car that'd make a Prius driver cry into their wheat grass – the kind of car that leaves a carbon footprint so large you could fill it with water and park your houseboat in it.

If you've ever thought any of those things, play this game without delay. **Luke Reilly**

Final Say

PRESENTATION The car models are ace, the smoke effects are top class and the cutscenes are as slick as a buttered mongoose. The world itself is a little plain at times.

SOUND Spot-on engine notes and crunchy effects, good voice acting and a quality soundtrack that includes an infectious rerecording of the theme from the original *Driver*.

CONTROLS The handling has been tuned to perfection. Delicately powersliding is very nearly a sexual experience. Set your car to sideways and your balls to stunned.

REPLAY VALUE This game is fat like a spring pig. Single-player (with a New Game Plus mode). Online multiplayer. Splitscreen multiplayer. It's exploding with content.

Verdict

A driving game like no other in a package that just keeps giving. A truly admirable return to form and the first properly worthy successor to *Reflections'* original pioneering 1999 car chase classic.

9

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Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
 NAMCO BANDAI
PARTNERS:
DEVELOPER: EIDOS
 MONTREAL
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$99.95

**Play this
 if you like**

*Mass Effect, Metal
 Gear Solid*

Deus Ex: Human Revolution

It's the rise of the robots

The *Deus Ex* franchise is a bit of a stranger to PlayStation, which is a pity.

The PC crowd (rightly) went nuts over the ground-breaking original back in 2000 and, while its sequel left a lot of gamers a little cold, the two of them are well regarded as action-adventure cyber punk titles. *Human Revolution* hits shelves eight years after *Invisible War* was released, but is set 25 years before the spine-tingling original – and it follows suit brilliantly.

What you get is a superbly woven plot that'll hook you into 20-odd hours of play on your first run through. The opening cinematic kicks the game off with ambiguity; a strained conversation between a well-dressed man and disguised figures on a computer screen, hinting at higher powers who have plans for people that have no choice but to bend to their will. What follows is a hash of lies, espionage and techno sabotage that you have to wade through as you step into the boots of Adam

Jensen, the head of security for Sarif Industries. They're a biotechnology firm specializing in mechanical augmentations, capable of replacing most of a human's entire body.

One of their scientists and Adam's girlfriend, Megan Reed, is on the cusp of a significant breakthrough and as you're guided through the labs you get glimpses of powerful tech. A pair of disembodied legs runs in unison with a man on a treadmill. Mechanical arms and hands litter desks, and the lab coats babble about scientific research. Sarif Industries has developed a top-secret project called the Typhoon under contract from the Department of Defense, enabling an augmented soldier to launch steel ball bearings out in a 360-degree arc, decimating anyone or anything unlucky, or foolish, enough to be caught in its radius.

Even your boss, David Sarif, a cunning and charismatic character, has a purely mechanical right arm, and he's excited about a future where

people are able to control their own evolution.

Then Sarif Industries is under attack. You're tasked with sorting it out, and after a couple of tutorials you're left for dead as one of the heavily augmented soldiers throws you through a window and then shoots you in the face. The last thing Jensen sees is Reed being slapped to the ground before the scene cuts to the operating table. He's rebuilt, emerging six months later, physically more machine than man. Reed is missing, and the company is reeling. Many are surprised to Jensen alive, never mind back at work.

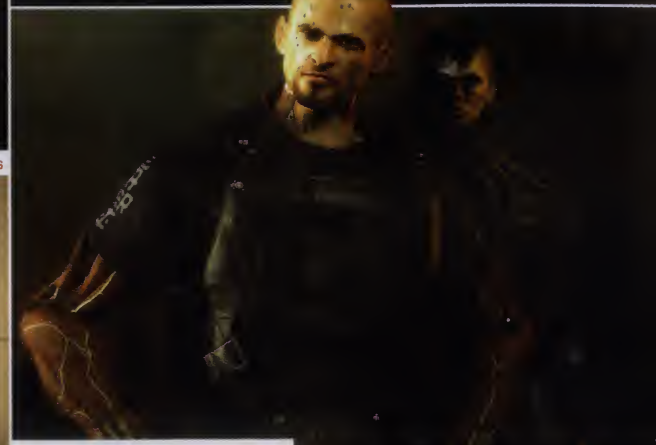
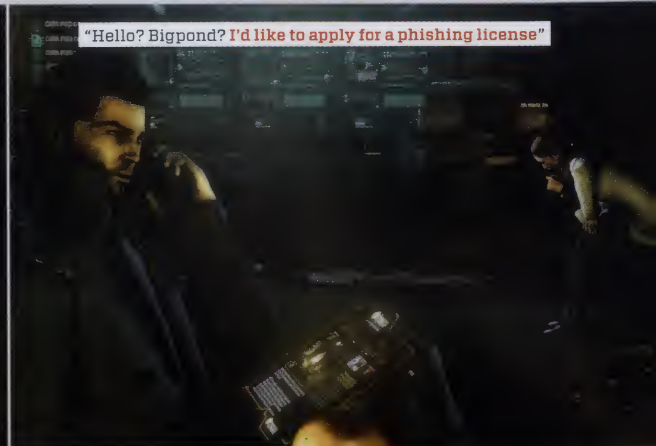
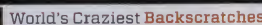
It's a powerful opening. Detroit in the year 2027 is beginning to tear itself apart as people begin to question the power that augmentations offer. Civil unrest is brewing and it's only going to get worse. You're just getting to grips with your new body when you're called back into duty. From the moment your first proper mission begins you're presented with choices that will impact your progress and alter the fate of humanity. No pressure, then. *Human Revolution* is all about story, and every decision you make affects you later on in one capacity or another. Sometimes it's in subtle ways, often intrinsic to the game but occasionally just to add your own understanding of what's actually going on in the world.

There's a lot to discover if you go picking (and you'll want to go picking), and this in turn is dependant on the way you go about it. While this isn't an open world (rather, a series of self-contained 'hubs' that take you from Detroit, to Hong Kong, Singapore and the very ends of the Earth) you have freedom in how you get from A to B, and *Deus Ex* veterans will see a lot of similarities between this and the previous games in the series.

You could tool up to put a bullet in every guard who gets in your way. The game accommodates this approach and has a weapon upgrade system that'll make a mess of whoever's at the pointy end – it also help



"This'll work, until I can afford that 'Astro Boy butt machine gun' upgrade"



We're calling **hax** on this



However, it balances out. Sneaking around and using your fists requires battery power. Knock an unsuspecting guy unconscious and you totally zap one of Jensen's batteries – and they only recharge if you briefly use, say, the



There are a lot of augmentations you can upgrade, but you can't get them all. Improve your hacking skills all the way to the top, and it's a good idea to be able to run silently, else you'll spend a lot of your time crouch running - most undignified. Plus, if you don't want to haemorrhage ammo, improve your recharge capabilities and amount of batteries to punch on.

Anatomy of a takedown

Apart from boss fights, it's totally possible to make your way through the game and not kill anyone. As long as Jensen is fully charged you can sneak up behind people and knock them out. Here's one way to do that.



▲ Wait for the prompt to appear, then hit ◎



▲ The camera cuts to third-person, and Jensen approaches...



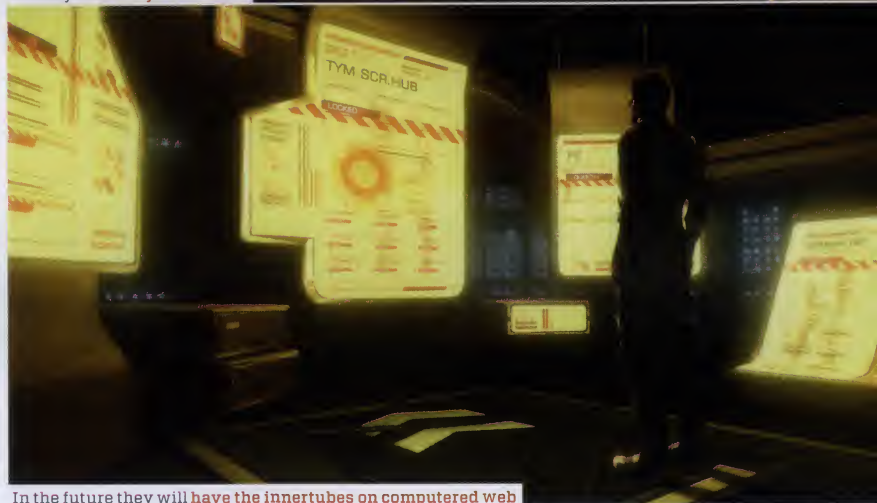
▲ ...and your bloke goes down without raising an alarm. Drag his body aside, too.



▲ Then loot his dribbling body for goodies. Winning!



Johnny 5 wants you un-alive



In the future they will have the innertubes on computered web

dampening aug or the invisibility shield and don't flatten a battery completely. Otherwise you need to chow down on a powerbar and boost your energy. (Amusingly, alongside painkillers, you can top up your health with beer, wine and whisky.) It's often hard to find resources for the stealthy weapons, such as the close-range stun gun or long-range tranquilliser, whereas ammo for the machine pistol or combat rifle is abundant. So do you fill your inventory with futuristic muesli bars or boxes of bullets?

It's a game that constantly makes you balance out the risks and the rewards. You might have a code to get through a door that you picked up from a hacked email, but type it in and you miss out on fleeing more XP from hacking the door. Sometimes you'll find extra credits that can be downloaded while you're hacking, or even an extremely useful Nuke or Stop Worm virus, two programs that aid your efforts in hacking devices. However, fumble the hack, either by being physically found or running out of time as the system you're breaking into detects your presence, you're locked out, the alarm's raised and you're sent scurrying away or into another fire fight.

You can also gain info on what to do by listening in on conversations. Guards sometimes

gather in clusters and as they're going over their plans will often spill info regarding who's going to be where, or chat about keeping an eye on a certain door.

When you're in the open there are plenty of citizens to talk to, and every NPC has something to say. Sometimes they'll even have a task, or just a line about how they're too busy to stop. Occasionally these tasks lead you on a path that you'd never thought about taking, meaning that finishing the game two or three times isn't going to be enough to wring everything the game world has to offer.

What's really remarkable is that you can cut out an entire, seemingly crucial, section. We were trying to corner an anti-augmentation author as he gave a speech with hopes of leveraging info regarding his weaselly assistant, and engaged him in a verbal stoush. A few *Mass Effect*-style conversation trees later and we've blundered it. The guards have scoped us out, the author knew we were coming for him so we hit the latest save file and reloaded. On our way back to the author we saw a vent, ducked in and found the guy's computer. We hacked it, and soon had the



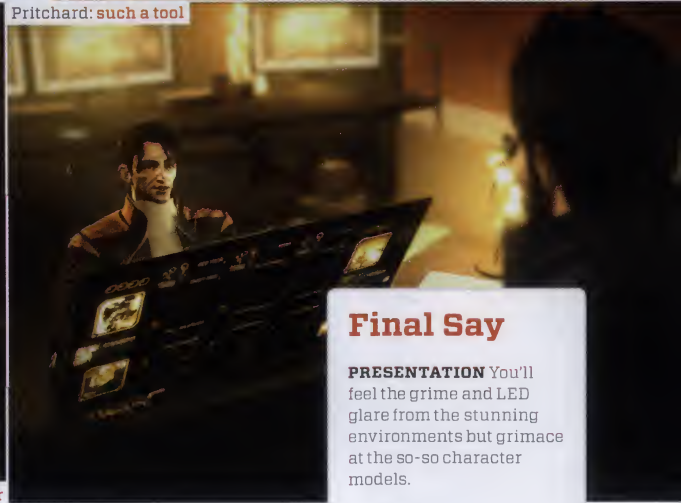
"Human Revolution has some of the best voice acting **ever** recorded in a videogame"

"Wilson! Stop doing lines of strawberry jam and help me!"

Pritchard: such a tool



This game should be **rated arr**



The past of the future

If you possess a backwards compatible 60GB PS3 (or one of the 150 million or so PS2s sold around the world), do yourself a massive favour and find a copy of *Deus Ex* on PS2. It's a bit ugly by today's standards and clunkier than the gearbox on your Nanna's car, but it's well worth it for the roots of the story. \$20 and eBay should sort you out nicely.

info we needed to track him down.

It might not sound like a big deal, but it was theoretically possible that we'd just bypassed a really impressive showdown; not only in terms of story exposition but also because it's a sheer joy to listen to Jensen and the supporting cast converse with each other. *Human Revolution* has some of the best voice acting ever recorded in a videogame. It's passionate, believable, and there's tonnes of dialogue.

As a side note, it'll take a brave or stubborn soul to constantly roll with the punches and not be tempted to rely on a save file to clear up their mess, but we bet that you'll reap the richest experience from this.

Again, back on the streets and you pick up on the civil unrest about augmented people. It all ties in with the *Deus Ex* timeline, and it's one of the game's strengths. All this background info builds atmosphere and you can feel it pushing in from all sides.

Where it lets itself down is with patchy presentation. Environments are near flawless, gloriously fleshed out and full of drama, but you'll be broken out of your spell with really shoddy character lip-synching and sub-par facial textures. Bodies clip through scenery.

They might sound like a petty thing to

needle at the game, but it's truly off-putting. Animations between NPCs are often recycled to comical effect. We watched two Sarif employees talking to each other, and as they stood side by side do a near synchronised conversation shuffle by moving their arms in the exact same way. There's also a weird, flickering shadow that crosses Jensen's chest and face – maybe a day one patch will fix this up – but it stops a truly great game from being excellent.

In the end this belongs on every gamer's shelf. It's a ripping thriller, with plot lines twisting round each other and looping over the top, with various streams running side-by-side competing for your attention. At times you'll get confused by what you're doing, and if it's the right way to go about it.

It's damn easy to get sidetracked, whether it's by accident as you're searching for a way to shut down a camera or avoid guards, or whether it's because you just can't resist flexing your hacking skills. No matter. Despite the flaws this'll be on your mind well after the credits roll. The plot is engrossing enough to make any techno freak froth at the mouth with lust. *Human Revolution* is a truly authentic *Deus Ex* game, and a great gaming experience in its own right. **Paul Taylor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION You'll feel the grime and LED glare from the stunning environments but grimace at the so-so character models.

SOUND Superb voice acting all round, save for the odd cheesy line.

CONTROLS Play it as a stealth'em up rather than a straight shooter. The cover mechanics take a little while to adjust to but they're solid in the end.

REPLAY VALUE You could be playing this for weeks to come as you discover every permutation. Loaded with trophies, too.

Verdict

Bordering on excellent, you'll marvel at the atmosphere and revel in the gameplay in one of this year's best games. Oh, and there's enough space for a sequel, surely.

8



Bodycount

A slaughter in which fun is the first casualty

Play this if you like

CoJ: *The Cartel*

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

PUBLISHER: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER:

CODEMASTERS

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$69.95

Bodycount lured us in by way of a tenuous DNA link with *Black* on PS2. If that's your entry angle also, let us dispel that relation right here and now. The only similarities between Criterion's 2006 creation and this fired blank is; they've both got guns in them, they both start with 'b', but *Black* was easier on the eyes.

It was also a celebration of shooting. A fetishistic shooter whose guns were plentiful and rendered with pornographic attention detail. In stark contrast, *Bodycount* eventually lets you unlock 10 guns total, only offers two per level and

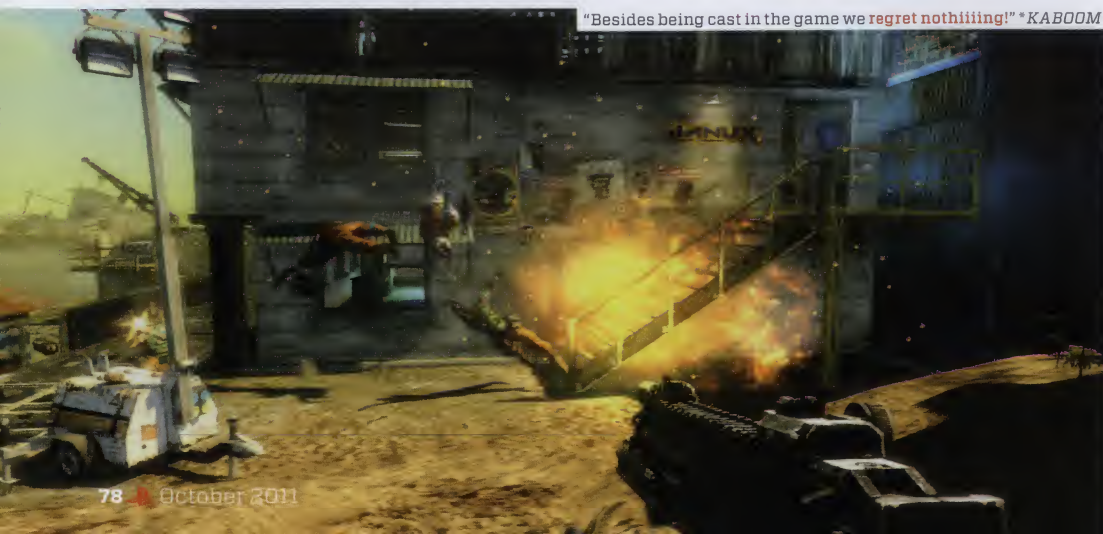
denies you the ability to swap them for the leavings of your foes (even if you're packing a pistol and they've dropped a sniper rifle, or a mini-gun). This anti-kleptomania, combined with near limitless reserves of ammo, makes for very peculiar game design. Without the basic tactical variety of weapon switching, every level becomes an exercise in déjà vu drudgery.

The only thing Codies do want you to scoop up are fields of neon balls, which inexplicably splodge out of your victims. These ubiquitous, eyesore spheres excel at two things: fueling the four special weapons

on your d-pad (adrenaline, airstrike, explosive rounds and enemy locator), and ruining the gritty warzone aesthetic of the visuals. Frankly, the whole concept is hopelessly inelegant and could have been solved by a simple cooldown mechanic.

Not caring about the pickups is standard procedure here and your blasé attitude will deepen as you realise the story isn't worth giving a rat's about. *Bodycount's* plot is mind-numbingly absurd, and is spread thinner than sunscreen at a tanning salon. Whoever penned this tripe didn't even bother assigning names to the major players, nor did they give the proceedings a point. You're 'The Asset', working for 'The Network' and guided by [generic female voice here] you must stop 'The Target'. One minute you're fighting low-rent scumbags in Africa, the next it's a bunch of sci-fi bucketheads fresh out of a Power Rangers convention.

Needless to say, these character designs would be hilarious if the blatant reuse of them wasn't so sad. Beyond the rehashed appearances of some mid-boss types, it's rare to see more than three unique-looking enemy characters clogging up a level. By the time you've shot "that African milita guy" – with the same uniform, weapon and identically angled cigarette hanging from his mouth – a hundred times, it's hard to stay enthused.



"Besides being cast in the game we regret nothiiiing!" *KABOOM*



Iron-sight aiming that isn't down the sight: stupid like a fox game design

The moment you do get bored of blasting things in *Bodycount* (and it won't take long) is the moment you'll start to improvise. Do that, and large fissures begin to appear in this experience. For example; enemies target so poorly, you can literally run big, dopey circles around them as they murder the air with ruthless, Stormtrooper precision. Being within melee range isn't dangerous, either, they pistol-whip like old people have sex.

The more time you spend with *Bodycount*, the harder it is to find unique, or even interesting, ideas in it. Here's a short list of non-broken things that caught our eye: double tapping 'grenade throw' pitches your explosive pineapples straight to target. You can deploy the world's most obvious, technicolour landmines. When your gun is down to the last quarter of its magazine, the sound of your bullets are intermixed with an annoying warning sound effect. That's about it.

Every other facet of *Bodycount* has either been poorly facsimiled from another shooter, or is an innovation whose flaws negate its benefit. Some examples that spring to mind include, a passable (but unneeded) first-person cover system, a regenerating health mechanic that's squeamish about using on-screen blood and a very inconsistent destruction engine. The latter has been spruiked as a major feature, but can't hold a match, let alone a candle, to the destructibility witnessed in the *Red Faction* and *Battlefield* series.

Bodycount also manages to ruin the thrill of having expansive levels. Don't get us wrong, we appreciate any shooter that breaks the *Call of Duty* mould by not funnelling us down corridors. But there's a hefty price to pay for all this freedom. The majority of locations are ugly, uninspired and you're constantly forced to replay through "differently tinted" versions of them. These budget shenanigans get so barefaced, you'll opt to sprint through half of your missions, just to end your torment faster. Be sure to wave hi to the AI as you go by; on normal difficulty you can goose-step and run through even large groups of enemies (even in the last level).

Force yourself to endure *Bodycount* for any extended period of time and you'll bear witness to some of the 'usual suspect' glitches and bugs. Enemies regularly run through one another, dance the corpse Charleston on the floor and we saw one guy unload a clip whilst charging at us backwards down some stairs.

Like all the other me-too shooters competing for your buck, *Bodycount* shoehorns in some online multiplayer as well. But, as you'd imagine, it's so hopelessly generic as to barely warrant a mention. That sentiment is a running theme throughout this whole sordid mess of a game. *Bodycount* is thoroughly boring ride that won't challenge your reflexes or intelligence. Ironically, the fact that this takes under four hours to get through is the best thing going for it.

Adam Mathew

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Codemasters' much vaunted Ego engine is absolutely wasted here. Dingo ugly in many places.

SOUND

Shotguns rarely sound this piss-weak, nor HUD reminders this annoying. Melodramatic, nonsense voice acting.

CONTROLS

Movement is a touch sluggish, iron-sighting and the cover system are frustratingly linked. Melee is piss-weak.

REPLAY VALUE

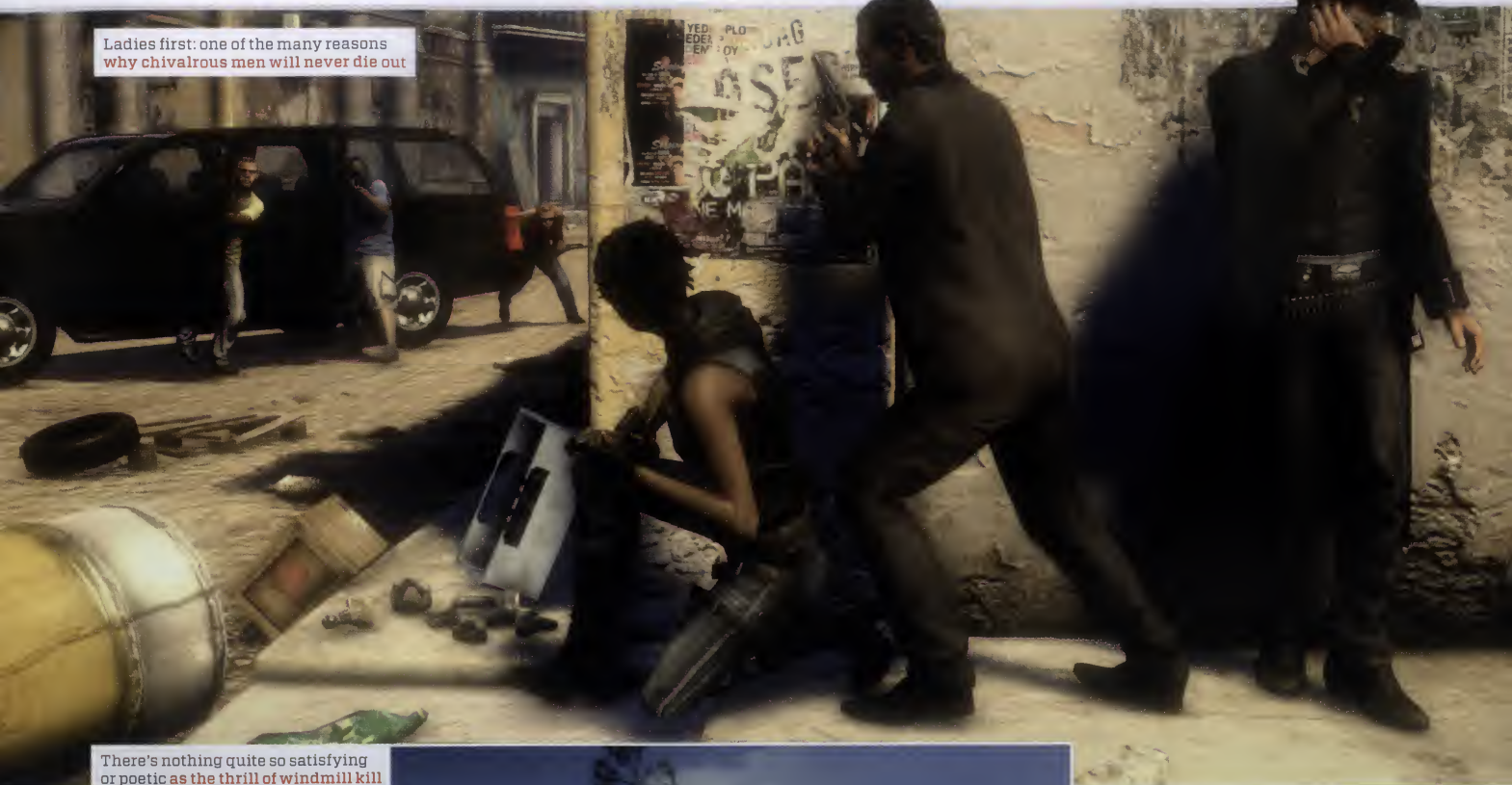
Thanks to severe level reuse, one playthrough is really two playthroughs. Neither is fun. Multi is uninspired.

Verdict

Short, silly and very unsatisfying. *Mirror's Edge* isn't the only game that can be beaten using pacifist first-person running.

3

Ladies first: one of the many reasons why chivalrous men will never die out



There's nothing quite so satisfying or poetic as the thrill of windmill kill



Call of Juarez: The Cartel

A fistful of disappointments

**Play this
if you like**

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: TECHLAND

PLAYERS: 1-12

Regular readers of *OPS* will know that a rootin', tootin' Wild West story is all it takes to set our nether-regions percolating. That said, after playing *Call of Juarez: The Cartel*, we can now give you another factoid to remember: "modern" Wild West games make us feel nothing but dead wood.

With Rockstar all but winning the West with *Red Dead Redemption*, it's easy to understand why Techland decided to contemporise its IP. *The Cartel*, as the name suggests, focuses on the war currently being waged by drug cartels, something that is turning America's backyard into a bad day in Beirut.

As such, you're given the choice of three cops who are embroiled in a cross-country investigation of the Mendoza crime syndicate. There's the token Walker Texas Ranger wannabe, Ben McCall (descendant of the previous games' protagonist, Ray McCall). A Halle Berry knockoff and ex-gangbanger, FBI Agent Kimberly Evans. Last but not least there's DEA agent, and insatiable gambler, Eddie Guerra. Unfortunately, no matter which doughnut patroller you choose you're in for the same bad old-fashioned, son-of-a-glitch shooting.

Techland has tried its best to season the action with some 'true grit' flavour,

but they've wound up making vanilla sarsaparilla instead. Whether you're unloading assault rifles, or John Wooing folks with dual pistols, the gunplay in *The Cartel* always feels unsatisfying and anaemic. Your enemies are bullet sponges, iron-sight aiming comes with a weird depth-of-field effect (that looks like your TV is fogging up), and you're constantly made to backtrack through levels. Even the most excitable FPS fan will roll into *The Cartel* hoping for hardcore narc action and wind up feeling narcolepsy.

A lot of the dreariness comes down to the fact that it takes nigh on a whole playthrough before you can unlock a decent heavy machine gun. We get that Techland wanted to curb the armaments towards the Western staples (pistols, shotguns, etc.), but at the end of the day you don't feel like a neo-cowboy, so much as you do a very underpowered cop. Half of the battle in a gunfight can be with the curious weapon balancing, too. For some reason all of the protagonists can't fire one of the basic pistols without it flipping in their mitts like a epileptic eel. On the other hand, they've got King Kong wrists when it comes to firing a .50 cal. Odd.

The action gets even worse when *The Cartel* decides to cram you into an SUV. Frankly, we don't know what is worse; being forced to awkwardly drive about in a linear fashion with no way to defend ourselves, or to be chauffeured but still desperately trying to swing the camera around to shoot baddies in the on-rails alternative.

Whether they're road-raging or on foot, the cartel goons act stupid enough to make you make you think they're high off their own supply. Spatial awareness isn't a strong suit for your two friendly AI buddies, either, as when they're not impeding your movements in corridors they'll be magically Caspering right through one another. We even spotted instances of them teleporting into existence right in our crosshairs when their buggy pathfinding



code gave up completely. But that's not even the worst of it. Their dogged stupidity becomes a new level of frustrating when you can't shepherd them out of a room and keep them well away from yourself.

Why would you want to be as far away from the friendly AI as possible? Well despite the obvious reason of hatred, it's because working by yourself is a leftover requirement from *The Cartel's* three-player, co-op mode.

At certain points in each level the three protagonists receive phone calls from dodgy friends begging for an illicit favour. So rather than supporting your other two cop buddies you'll follow a special marker and earn XP by planting evidence, swiping cash, picking peanuts out of poop, or whatever else passes for a nefarious deed nowadays.

Do this in full view of your (equally corrupt) cohorts and you'll be penalised. With a few human allies this sneaky side-diversion is easily the most entertaining and unique thing going for *The Cartel*. However, it is very poorly integrated into single-player. Trying to level up can be downright painful when you have two AI buddies tailing your every move so closely they may as well be growing on your butt.

Speaking of posterior fungus, the Chrome 5 engine really isn't all that much to look at. We saw many a rookie issue, like corpses breakdancing in walls, whole scripted "blockbuster events" failing to trigger correctly (and requiring a checkpoint restart) and a criminal amount of environment reuse. No matter where you look, *The Cartel* feels like it's on the wrong side of a used-by date.

But just as your eyes are wincing, your ears will bleed as well. The dialogue reeks of 'try-hard potty-mouth' syndrome and it's most evident as Ben McCall sprinkles Bible scriptures with f-bombs during the slow-mo ability. This wouldn't be so bad if there were more than a handful of these not-so-penitent sermons. After 10 minutes you'll quick-draw for the volume controls.

Your decision to do that will actually make the story much more bearable, too. All three of the plot threads are as aimless as tumbleweed and thoroughly forgettable.

That being the case, *The Cartel* isn't so much an arresting single-player experience as it is a total bust. It's rushed, uninspired and Techland opting to move the setting forward in time has effectively made this cult-favourite franchise go backward.

Sure, there are some minor kicks in three player co-op, but they're very short-lived and fraught with frustration. *Call of Juarez* should have stuck to its guns and remained an Old Wild Western. Avoid this like you would the real po-lice. **Adam Mathew**

The multiplayer cop out

When it comes to adversarial multiplayer, *The Cartel* isn't worth a few dollars more at all. You get all the basic features (deathmatch, team deathmatch, protect the VIP, etc) and while they're all functional enough, they're hopelessly non-descript. Give it a month and these lobbies will be emptier than a Mexican mesa at midnight.

Final Say

PRESENTATION Visuals that are past their use-by date. Barely up to scratch animations.

SOUND Insanely repetitive dialogue that is laced with more MF's than sense.

CONTROLS Not razor tight, but not too shabby. Default controls are mapped especially awkward.

REPLAY VALUE The co-op is worth a budget-priced laugh. Otherwise, you'll have little desire to replay this as all three cops.

Verdict

Buggy, ugly and mostly uninspired. This is how West was lost, pardner.

4

How do you know if there is a fighter pilot at your party? He'll tell you

We bet that guy just Messerschmitt himself

Powered by a Merlin. And not that awkward wizard from TV

Air Conflicts: Secret Wars

Don't tell anybody

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: FLIGHT

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: AIE

DEVELOPER: BITCOMPOSER

PLAYERS: 1-8

RRP: \$69.95



Red Tails

If there are any developers reading this, and you're going to make a flight game, get online and at least watch the trailer for *Red Tails*. It's an upcoming 2012 movie from Lucasfilm, and the first Lucasfilm production since *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in 1956. *Red Tails* is the story of the Tuskegee Army, a group of African American combat pilots during World War II, and the aerial action looks proper bananas. Forget sterile, paint-by-numbers, nondescript-titled tripe like *Air Conflicts*. Make this. Intense.

Some videogames have names that make you suspect all the cool titles have already been taken. *Air Conflicts: Secret Wars* is one example, a scattergun assemblage of junk words (cribbed from other, better videogames) containing at least one too many plurals and meaning very little. *Air Conflicts: Secret Wars* is a burst of word diarrhoea separated by a colon; it sounds like it was named by a computer. But we're being petty.

Thing is, everything about *Air Conflicts* seems bent on reminding you as often as possible you're playing a dud – from its bargain bin name to its low production values.

The utilitarian visuals fail to impress and the sound is worse. The dire mixing turns the roar of even a Spitfire's 27-litre, 1,500 horsepower V-12 into a flaccid, barely audible buzz, drowned out by the impossibly awful voice acting.

The dozen or so characters in *Air Conflicts* are voiced by just four voice actors, meaning many conversations are comprised of the same actor talking to themselves in slightly different accents. On the topic of accents, *Air Conflicts* features an Australian accent so bad it'd strip the Vegemite off your toast at 100 metres.

The cutscenes between missions are naught but illustrations the camera will pan across a few times in a few different directions. The story seems like a turkey anyway. Set during WWII you'll become French woman Dorothy "DeeDee" Derbec, full-time smuggler, part-time partisan and occasional murderer. There are a few 'flashback' missions to WWI and the skies above Gallipoli as a friend of her father but disappointingly they're nothing special.

Then there are the typos in the loading screen tips, and the mission briefings that simply

couldn't have been proof read. One sortie required us to tail a top secret prototype jet, informed us that *under no circumstances* were we to damage said jet and, in the very next paragraph, instructed us to *cripple the jet* and force it to CRASH-LAND in a forest.

How about gameplay then? One can forgive an overall lack of polish if it's at least fun. Meh. It functions, but the flying itself feels very superficial. It lacks any real nuance and there's no sense of speed to speak of. Bank, fire. Yawn.

Corners are cut everywhere. Landing? Just fly through these glowing rings and you'll be teleported to the ground. Mid-air collisions? Nope. Planes pass through each other like two ghost jocks going for a chest bump. The cockpit view? Dead. Ever seen a pilot wrestle a B-25 around the sky without a single hand on the control stick? We have.

The missions rarely excite (and often confuse: why must we engage in a dogfight with Russian fighters after strafing German ships in a British plane?). Also, story mode is padded out with delivery missions so dull the microorganisms living in the creases of your fingers will die of boredom.

Planes have damage modelling but it doesn't impact your plane's performance and it's far too extreme. Planes remain airworthy long after the damage would have turned you into a sombre letter to your nearest relative and, as such, they can look downright ridiculous flying about.

If you're after a WWII flight game wait for *Birds of Steel*, from Moscow studio Gaijin, due out early next year. If you can't wait, buy *IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey*, also from Gaijin, instead. *Air Conflicts* simply cannot compete with it on any level. **Luke Reilly**

Play this if you like

IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey, but you won't like this near as much

Final Say

PRESENTATION Basic visuals and lacking polish in every area.

SOUND Hideous voice acting and limp sound effects.

CONTROLS The arcade controls strangle you, the simulation controls are anything but and the Move controls aren't any fun.

REPLAY VALUE Boring the first time around with multiplayer no one will play.

Verdict

Promptly blasted out of the sky by its betters. Even ardent WWII flight freaks will be left cold here.

4



ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR BETTER PICTURES!

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CS5 Extended

Digital Photography

The Macro Issue

Volume 20

WEIRD & WONDERFUL

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Macro in *motion*

High-speed macro secrets to get you shooting like a pro!

HIDDEN WORLDS

» Photography on a molecular scale!



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▶ WHAT'S NEW

PSN DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

Gunslingers, assassins, and Ridley freakin' Scott are about to invade the PSN. Rockstar is releasing the multiplayer-based *Myths and Mavericks Bonus Pack* for free for *Red Dead Redemption*. It'll feature new, requested multiplayer characters – including a cryptic reference to a 'grizzled ol' gunslinger' – and new multiplayer locations in Deathmatch, Grab the Bag, and Gang matches, amongst others. A firm date hasn't been set, but it will be released during September. The publisher will also release a patch to restore the original settings for the Undead Overrun multiplayer mode.

It's knives out from September 3 – 11, as the *Assassin's Creed Revelations* multiplayer beta takes place. Note, it's only available for Uplay members and PS Plus account holders. The beta features nine characters, three stab-tacular maps and four playable modes (including the brand new Deathmatch and Artifact Assault).

So how does Ridley 'Blade Runner' Scott fit into this? The revered director is, along with Will Arnett, Jason Bateman, Ben Silverman and Tony Scott, creating content for Activision's new *Call of Duty: Elite* service. We don't know in what capacity, but this gaggle of directors is an impressive coup nonetheless.

Finally, if you're a PS Plus member, like a bargain and are willing to take a punt on a few games, you can save a bundle of cash on four games, AND get a free game for laying down your money early. Sounds like a decent deal to us. As part of PlayStation Network Play, PS Plus members who buy *Street Fighter III: Third Strike Online Edition*, *Deathspank*:



Pistols at dawn, news at nine

The Baconing, Bloodrayne: Betrayal and *Renegade Ops* before 20th September save 20 per cent off the purchase price, and also get *Payday: The Heist* for zero dollars.

Also, if you're very, very quick (or subscribe to the mag and get this early) PS Plus members can also get the following discounts until September 7:

- 20% off *Splinter Cell HD*
- 10% off *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow HD*
- Free theme with purchase of *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*
- 15% off *Worms 2: Armageddon* Forts pack
- 15% off *Worms 2: Armageddon* Puzzle pack



She saw the sign. And it opened up her eyes

VidZone PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: Animated Videos



MASSIVE ATTACK - ATLAS AIR

This dreamy, syncopated synth tune has a mental rabbit loping across a polygon landscape. Cool game concept.



THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS - SALMON DANCE

Talking fish give out the facts of life. Informational, educational, hilarious.



JUNIOR SENIOR - MOVE YOUR FEET

Another animal features; this time a squirrel causes destruction but ultimately reaching his comeuppance.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available **free** on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!



PlayStation®Network

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



EL SHADDAI: AOTM

Following in the path blazed by *Dante's Inferno* and *Darksiders* is another game that riffs on Biblical texts. It's hauntingly sparse, and you need to experiment with the way you hit the attack button.



LIMBO

Originally on PC and Another Platform, you take control of a boy who wakes up in a forest and needs to find a way out past the giant spiders. Yeah, it's short, but it's remarkably thoughtful and occasionally breathtaking.



GALAGA LEGIONS DX

This is the to the original *Galaga* what *Pac-Man CE DX* is to the original dot eater. Utterly mental but figure out its patterns and you'll be hooked. It's already putting next issue in jeopardy.



DIRT 3 - GYMKHANA MINI

Completely insane but fantastic for taking on the Fiesta in multiplayer, on account of its more compact frame. It's very affordable – in fact, you could say it's *dirt* cheap.



DRIVER SAN FRAN - MULTIPLAYER

Seen the review on page 68 and still not convinced? Okay. This multi demo features two modes that had us swearing loudly at each other – Tag and Trailblazer.

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation®Network

TROPHY LIVES

You love games so much you may as well be hitched to them. Here's what you did to get your beloved trophies.



Daryl Andrew Noack

Game: Prototype

Trophy: Platinum



The last boss on the hardest difficulty made all the frustration worth it, as it was my very first Platinum Trophy.



Jeremy Szal

Game: Final Fantasy XIII

Trophy: Platinum



200+ hour grind, needing a perfect rating in 64 side missions, and also to kill the toughest enemies in the game over and over.



Michael Napper

Game: Midnight Club LA

Trophy: Silver



It was the trophy for driving 5000 miles, and I say this is because this Trophy was the last one I needed for the Platinum.

GENRE: RPG **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT **PLAYERS:** 1 **RRP:** \$19.95

DLC >

Fallout: New Vegas - Old World Blues

Welcome to The Scary Door

Given the semi serious tone of the previous batches of downloadable content for *Fallout: New Vegas*, (*Dead Money* and *Honest Hearts*) this latest addition, *Old World Blues*, comes as a welcome and humorous respite from its brethren with its tongue firmly planted in its cheek and a nod to 1950s styled science-fiction.

With a plotline that could have been ripped straight from the classic TV show *The Twilight Zone*, after investigating a defunct movie drive-in you find yourself transported to a strange encapsulated mountain that resembles a mad scientist's playground. Some of the world's greatest minds are trapped within and entreated you to perform a few tasks on their behalf. When we say their minds are trapped we mean it – literally. They've abandoned

their bodies and exist as brain matter only, trapped within robotic bodies.

It appears one of their former colleagues has gone rogue and it's up to you to defeat his horde of lobotomised human soldiers, nightstalkers, robot sentries and robo-scorpions and return this facility to some semblance of normality.

You're not doing it out of the goodness of your heart either. Your "allies" have taken a few things dear to you, namely your brain, heart and spinal column and if you ever wish to become whole again, you must jump through their hoops and complete the missions they've charged you with.

As you can tell, it's a beyond ludicrous premise and is populated by some of the quirkiest and funniest characters



Point away from face: check



in *New Vegas*. The combat is tough as enemies tend to swarm and the area is curiously deficient of stimpaks, so you'll need to stock up on Nuka-cola and Sunset Sarsaparilla for an extra health boost. As with all DLC, you can't bring any companions with you. You can, however bring all your kit (a first for *New Vegas* DLC) so we highly recommend picking your favourite weapons and stocking up on stimpaks and ammo before taking *Old World Blues* for a spin.

VERDICT

Old World Blues is easily the best value for money and most challenging DLC yet for *Fallout: New Vegas* and a downright laugh riot at times. If you've been looking for an excuse to revisit the Mojave, you've just found it.



PlayStation®Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH

PLAYERS: 1-16

Take *MW2* and add in some insanely addictive contracts and inventive modes in the multiplayer proper. However, we especially like playing *Zombies* with a skilled compatriot.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO

PLAYERS: 1-16

The connection issues that bothered us are well and truly fixed, so there's no excuse not to jump on, form a posse and start hunting for challengers. Much better as a co-op experience.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

PLAYERS: 1-4

It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses hanging around, marvelling at your quarter-circle technique. Champagne gaming.



FIFA 11

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS

PLAYERS: 1-22

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. It's still as compelling and smooth as last year's effort. Get on it right now.



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

DEVELOPER: DICE

PLAYERS: 1-16

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves.

► BLAST FROM THE PAST

The coolest Easter egg ever?

Great Scott! *Driver: San Francisco* turns back the clock!

We didn't find the training level at the beginning of the original *Driver* particularly difficult, but it's actually the reason a lot of people never made it to the first level of the game. In the ultimate bit of *Driver* fan service Reflections has reimagined this infamous level and included it as a hidden bonus in *Driver: San Francisco*. Here's how to get it!



STEP 1 ► Unlock it



1 ► Head to your nearest garage; it doesn't matter which one as long as you've unlocked the DeLorean DMC-12 for purchase.



2 ► Scroll down to DMC, buy it and select it. When you leave the garage you'll be driving it.



3 ► If you haven't already guessed it, you need to get this baby up to 88 miles per hour (although when we tested it we were doing over 100mph when the Easter Egg unlocked). Just floor it until it happens.



4 ► Bam, done. You'll be thrust into shift mode and told you've just discovered something special. All you need to do now is shift back to the garage, head to your special challenges and give it a go.

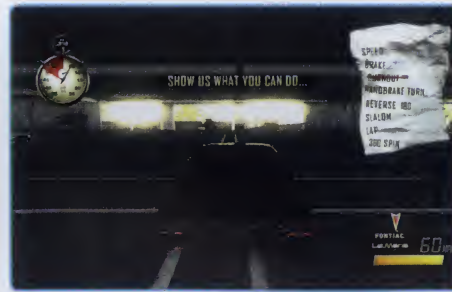
STEP 2 ▶ Enjoy it!



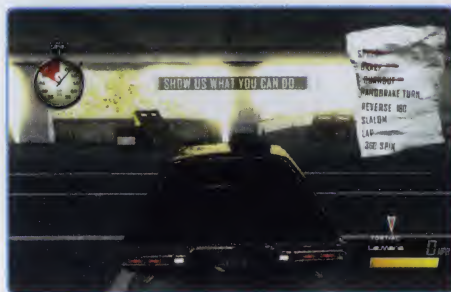
1 ▶ Don't worry, it's not too tricky once you've mastered the handling model. You'll break one minute easy!



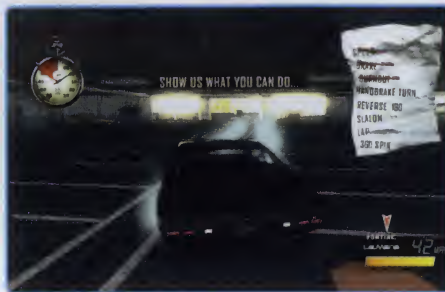
2 ▶ Give it the beans while you've got your finger on the handbrake. Release the handbrake for the BURNOUT.



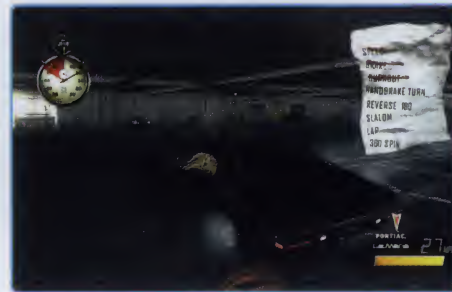
3 ▶ Floor it until you hit 60mph for SPEED and slam on the anchors so you don't hit the wall. Keep the car straight.



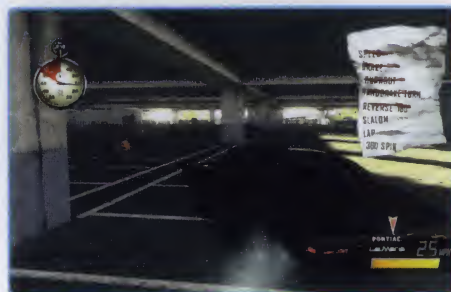
4 ▶ You'll pull up a few metres from the wall and get BRAKE. Keep the brake held and allow the car to begin reversing.



5 ▶ Get it up to 40mph or so and wrench the wheel in your favourite direction to bring the nose around.



6 ▶ Give a handbrake a quick yank as you're sliding and you'll get both the REVERSE 180 and the HANDBRAKE TURN.



7 ▶ Choose whichever row of supports you're facing and hook around one of the end ones.



8 ▶ You need to weave up and back for SLALOM. Watch out for any parked cars!



9 ▶ You should be able to peel out of your slalom and into a LAP.



10 ▶ Clockwise or counter clockwise, it doesn't really matter, just make it fast and faultless.



11 ▶ Plunge back into the centre for a 360 SPIN and you'll be apples.



12 ▶ Done! How do you rate against the rest of the world?



Inspired

The garage level is actually a riff on a similar scene from the 1978 crime film *The Driver*, directed by Walter Hill and starring Ryan O'Neal and Bruce Dern. When we chatted to series creator Martin Edmondson a few months back he revealed *The Driver* is the first film he was taken to as a kid. In the film scene, the Driver proves his precise skills behind the wheel by systematically destroying a 1969 Mercedes-Benz 280 S by hooning around a parking garage, but while keeping the car in good enough condition to remain running. Edmondson also revealed at the time that they had the car from *The Driver*, but this Merc does not appear in his game. He may have been referring to the Chevy C-10 or Pontiac Trans-Am that also appear in the film (they can be found in a movie challenge called 'Driven' inspired by *The Driver*).

► MUST WATCH

Star Wars: The Complete Saga

DIRECTOR: GEORGE LUCAS **CAST:** MARK HAMILL, HARRISON FORD, CARRIE FISHER, ALEC GUINNESS, BILLY DEE WILLIAMS, FRANK OZ, ANTHONY DANIELS **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY

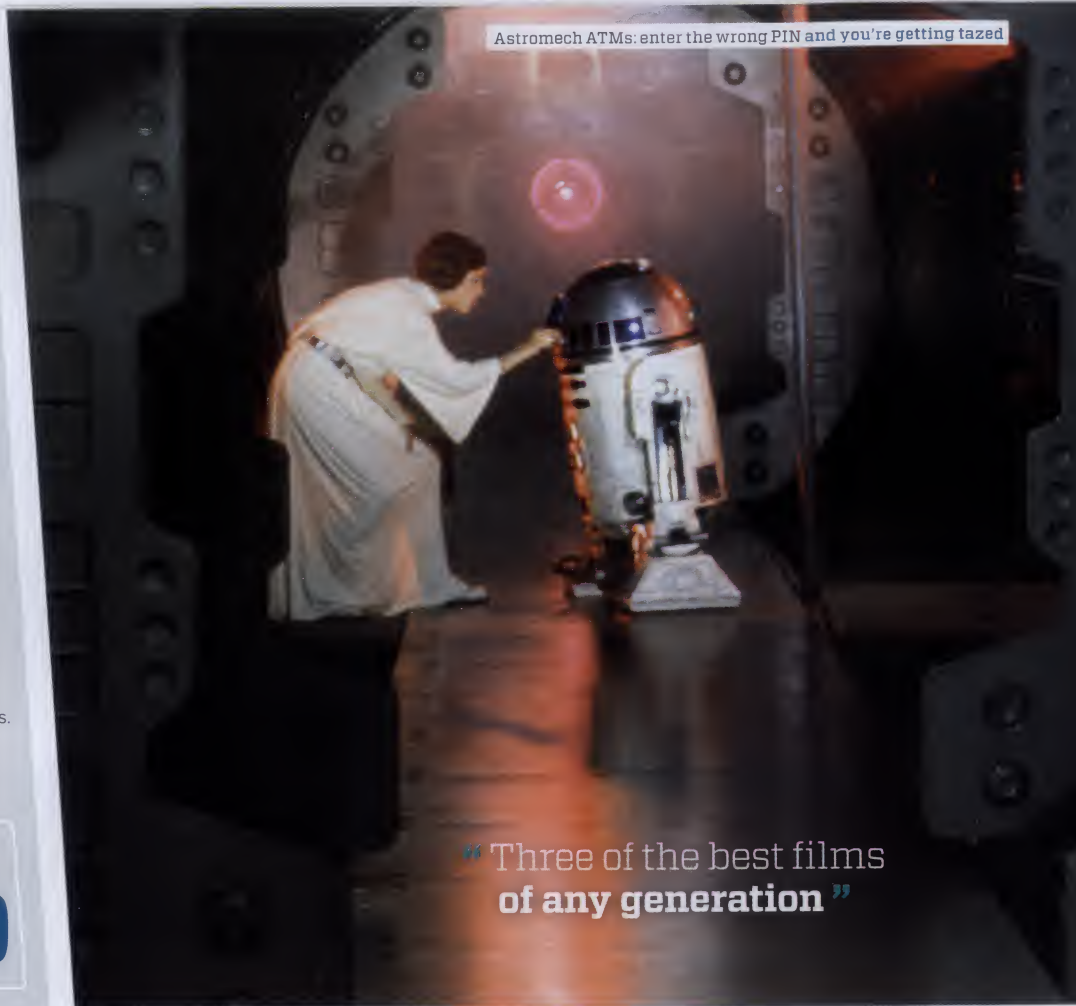
A long time ago, in a Cineplex far, far away the world was wowed off its feet with one of the greatest sci-fi experiences ever created. 34 years later this sprawling space opera is being preserved to digital perfection in the Blu-ray format in one of three packs: prequels, original trilogy or the whole shebang together. Each film is presented on one Blu-ray disc each, plus the "complete pack" comes with three bonus discs. This means, along with three of the best films of any generation (and three passable ones), you'll get 40 hours of in-depth bonus features, including never-before-seen deleted and alternate scenes. A powerful pack this is. Acquire it, you must.

Watch this if you wrote 'Jedi' in the census

Verdict

Every scene is already scorched into your mind like a lightsaber mark. But this is one helluva good pack.

10



Astromech ATMs: enter the wrong PIN and you're getting tazed

"Three of the best films of any generation"



22 Bullets

(MA15+)

DIRECTOR: RICHARD BERRY **CAST:** JEAN RENO, KAD MERAD **AVAILABLE (RENT)** \$5.99 **(OWN)** \$24.99, 1422MB (SD)

2 *Bullets* (released in France as *L'immortel*) is a French film featuring Jean Reno (*The Professional*, *Ronin*, er, *Onimusha 3*) in the lead role.

Charly Mattei has turned his back on his outlaw past. He was once a feared but fair kingpin in the criminal underworld – women, kids, cops and drug were off limits – but for three years he has led a peaceful life and devoted himself to his wife and two children. However, his history comes back to haunt him when he's ambushed in a parking lot and left for dead with 22 bullets in his body. Against all

odds he survives, but he does not react.

Of course, spilled blood never dries and when his enemies turn their attention to those closest to him his revenge is swift and merciless.

Verdict Well executed. Highly recommended for fans of hard-nosed European action-thrillers like *Taken*.

8

PlayStation®Store

► TOP TEN

Movies on Demand



- 1 **Just Go With It** Sony
- 2 **Hop** Universal
- 3 **Rango** Paramount
- 4 **The Adjustment Bureau** Universal
- 5 **Conviction** Fox
- 6 **Hall Pass** Warner Bros.
- 7 **I Am Number Four** Touchstone
- 8 **The Next Three Days** Roadshow
- 9 **The Fighter** Roadshow
- 10 **Never Let Me Go** Fox

Now available to rent or own on PlayStation®Store

The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!



Battle: Los Angeles (M)

DIRECTOR: JONATHAN LIEBESMAN **CAST:** AARON ECKHART, MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ, BRIDGET MOYNAHAN, LUCAS TILL, RAMON RODRIGUEZ, MICHAEL PEÑA, NOEL FISHER
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY, DVD

As regular frequenters of Los Angeles, nothing would please us more than watching aliens tear it a new one. Unfortunately, thanks to some seriously quaky camera work, we often didn't see as much of that destruction as we should. The CGI and action is relatively solid when it isn't marred by this effect, what really weighs this down is the cheeseball dialogue and tired old war clichés. Some of the solemn scenes wind up being hilarious because of it. *Battle: Los Angeles* is essentially the *Independence Day* of this decade. That said, if you can check your brain at the door it's an okay rental.

Watch this if you like *Independence Day*

Verdict You'll be force-fed enough American pie and Semper Fi to make you queasy.

4



Insidious (M)

DIRECTOR: JAMES WAN **CAST:** PATRICK WILSON, ROSE BYRNE, TY SIMPKINS, LIN SHAYE, LEIGH WHANNELL, ANGUS SAMPSON, BARBARA HERSHEY
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY, DVD

Modern day veterans of the horror scene (James Wan and Leigh Whannell from *SAW* and *Paranormal Activity* writer/director Oren Peli) team up to make another haunted house tale that's loaded with clichés but still remains a very successful fright fest.

A young family move into their new home, but after a door opens by itself and one of their children falls off a ladder in the attic sending him into a coma, Dad Josh (Wilson) moves the family again thinking the house is haunted. Turns out it's more likely it's the family that's haunted.

Cue creaky doors and floors (snore) with a few clever tricks here and there. Rose Byrne rises above making this watchable.

Watch this if you like *Paranormal Activity*

Verdict Not particularly scary. The soundtrack of squeaks gives things away, but still entertaining.

6



Scarface (R18+)

DIRECTOR: BRIAN DE PALMA **CAST:** AL PACINO, STEVEN BAUER, MICHELLE PFEIFFER, MARY ELIZABETH MASTRANTONIO, ROBERT LOGGIA
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY

When *Scarface* was first unleashed it earned the hell out of its R-rating. So much so, a few critics thought that even for an action drama it was way over the top. But for many others, who had done a kilo of Peruvian blow, this was a documentary.

Tony Montana is an absolutely mesmerizing character and the details of his "bad guys never win (but they do get to buy a tiger) drug baron career" is the stuff of legend. Even if you've never watched this, you're probably familiar with it already; Rockstar practically remade it with *GTA: Vice City*.

Scarface is every bit a perennial classic, a must watch film that is eminently quotable. In it Al Pacino gave us, "Say hello to my little friend", a line heard in bedrooms all around the world. Sad, but true.

Watch this if you like watching Al Pacino swear a lot

Verdict A gold mine of action, gangsters and all-time dialogue. Witness the '80s at its gaudiest.

9



Drive Angry (R18+)

DIRECTOR: PATRICK LUSSIER **CAST:** NICOLAS CAGE, AMBER HEARD, KATY MIXON, BILLY BURKE, DAVID MORSE, WILLIAM FICHTNER
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

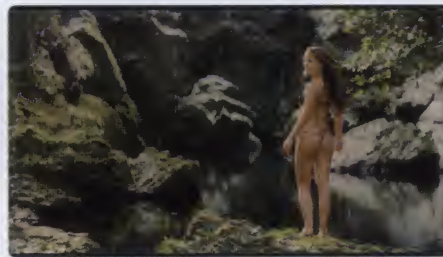
Nicolas Cage is John Milton, a hardened felon who has broken out of hell for one last chance at redemption. Jonah King, the leader of a Satanic cult, has murdered Milton's daughter and kidnapped her baby. In three days, King and his followers will sacrifice the child at midnight. Bent on stopping them Milton must track them down, with the help of a waitress named Piper he rescues from her brutal fiancé and some of Detroit's finest muscle, before it's too late.

It falters a bit after a strong start but it's worth watching for Amber Heard alone who (in real life) is bisexual and owns a .357 Magnum and drives a 1968 Ford Mustang. We're in love.

Watch this if you like *Machete*

Verdict Revenge porn in a V8 coupe. Not as clever as *Machete* but fun to watch.

7



Your Highness (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: DAVID GORDON **CAST:** DANNY MCBRIDE, JAMES FRANCO, NATALIE PORTMAN, ZOOEY DESCHANEL, JUSTIN THEROUX
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

Thadeous (McBride) and Fabious (Franco) are the sons of King Tallious. They are both warriors, but Fabious is dashing and skilled whereas Thadeous is lazy and rubbish.

In order to celebrate his latest victory, Fabious decides to marry his virgin girlfriend Belladonna (Deschanel), but the ceremony is interrupted by the arrival of the evil sorcerer Leezar (Justin Theroux), who kidnaps Belladonna and imprisons her at his dungeon, intending to ravage her when the two Moons converge, impregnating her with a dragon that will allow him to take over King Tallious' kingdom.

Watch this if you like *Pineapple Express*

Verdict Remove the wit of *The Princess Bride* and replace with cursing. Meh.

5



Blitz (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: ELLIOTT LESTER **CAST:** JASON STATHAM, PADDY CONSIDINE, AIDEN GILLEN
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

Jason Statham heads the cast of *Blitz* as the uncompromising and un-PC Detective Tom "Do I look like the kind of guy who carries a pencil?" Brant, a man who is introduced to viewers while thrashing a bunch of knife-wielding, car-jacking hoodies with a hockey stick.

Brant is teamed with unlikely partner, the clean-cut and gay Porter Nash (Considine), to investigate a series of police murders.

On the trail of a media-hungry cop-killer *Blitz* plays out like a trashy South London reimagining of *Dirty Harry*, and it works pretty well.

It's based on the novel of the same name by Ken Bruen but if you have a fear of books, never fear. At its heart *Blitz* is still a good, old-fashioned head-kicker.

Watch this if you like Jason Statham

Verdict A little rough, but watching Jason Statham do what he does best is always a hoot.

7

► NOW SHOWING

Captain America: The First Avenger (M)

DIRECTOR: JOE JOHNSTON **CAST:** CHRIS EVANS, HAYLEY ATWELL, HUGO WEAVING, TOMMY LEE JONES
IN CINEMAS: NOW

Steve Rogers (Evans) is a weakling, but he's no wimp. It's 1942, and Rogers wants to join the American army so he can do his part. It's not that he's looking for a fight; he just hates bullies.

Fate and determination combine and Rogers becomes part of an experiment to create a new breed of soldier, turning him from a 40-kilos-when-wet shrimp to a beefcake that just won't quit. Getting to the front lines still isn't as simple as he'd wanted it to be, but when he's there he's up against Schmidt (Weaving) who shares Hitler's fascination of the occult. Schmidt, however, treats it as a science and generates horrific results.

We're not sure how many Captain America fans are out there. He's a character that was designed as a piece of American propaganda during World War II, and we can only put the timing of his filmic revival down to Marvel wanting to introduce film goers to Cap for the Avengers movie that's coming out in 2012.

Still, Johnston has crafted a really enjoyable comic book flick with just the right balance of stylised action and realism. Evans is a charming, stoic lead and Weaving draws on *The Matrix's* Agent Smith and sets his eyebrows to 'maximum evil'. Tommy Lee Jones, however, steals the best comic bits.

By the end, *Captain America* feels like a movie that you'd happily end up watching accidentally, rather than intentionally choosing to go and see; one that's enjoyable but will evaporate from your consciousness as soon as you step outside the cinema. Sometimes, though, that's all you want.

Watch this if you like *Iron Man*, *Thor*



"Nazis. I also hate these guys"

"Cling to me monkey! Cling for your very life!"



Rise of the Planet of the Apes (M)

DIRECTOR: RUPERT WYATT **CAST:** JAMES FRANCO, ANDY SERKIS, JOHN LITHGOW, FREIDA PINTO
IN CINEMAS: NOW

Andy Serkis has a thing for simians. He's beat his chest as the gigantic King Kong, acted out the scenes as Monkey in *Ninja Theory's* *Enslaved*, and now turns one of his best performances as Caesar, an ape born with a genetic advantage.

Rise of is an origin story, completely ignoring the 2001 'Marky' Mark Wahlberg remake but happily sitting in parallel to the 1968 original. You don't need to have seen the Charlton Heston flick, though you'll smile at the nods and references to the past.

Will Rodman (Franco) is the unwitting architect of his own demise, rescuing Caesar from the lab he works at when the ape is barely a newborn. Rodman's trying to create a cure for Alzheimer's

though as a side effect his miracle drug ends up making chimps smarter, and Caesar starts to display human qualities – elements that were passed on from his mother.

There's pressure on Rodman from his profit-driven boss to get the drug finished so it can be sold but he has a more personal reason to get it right, since his own father (Lithgow) suffers from the disease. Rodman treads close to being a tragic hero and when the credits roll you won't escape from the irony of what he was trying to do.

The movie, however, belongs to Caesar, who realises his true potential with devastating results when locked up in a chimp big house, culminating in a spine-tingling climax. It helps that the special effects are spot on. Recommended.

"It's Captain America. He's stealing my lines"



Cowboys & Aliens (M)

DIRECTOR: JON FAVREAU **CAST:** HARRISON FORD, DANIEL CRAIG, OLIVIA WILDE, SAM ROCKWELL **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

This sounds awesome: Indiana Jones and James Bond team up to fight aliens in the Wild West circa 1875. All right, so it's not actually Jones and Bond, though the grizzled duo of Ford and Craig promise action that'd leap off the screen. They don't quite pull it off to the extent you expect, but *Cowboys & Aliens* is entertaining without being leave-your-brain-at-the-door dumb. Sure, that title sounds a bit derpy-derp but you'll be surprised how brutal and engaging it can be.

Jake Lonergan (Craig) regains consciousness in the desert, not knowing who he is but with a foreign looking device on his wrist. He staggers into the town of Absolution with its cast of familiar archetypes and, after initial resistance from the townsfolk, turns out to be one of the saviours against a horde of invading aliens.

It's loaded with action sequences but it's a tease when it comes to knowing what the hell the aliens are doing with humans. They're on Earth to steal our gold, which is more valuable on their own planet than it is on ours.

The cast and production crew alone make this interesting and, although it stumbles somewhat, this is easily digestible fare.



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IVAN BASSO ON THE
LONG ROAD BACK

(BRYN LENNON/GETTY IMAGES)

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index

ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

ACTION

- 50 Cent: Blood on the Sand** 7
SWORFISH STUDIOS
So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than it sounds.
- NEW Captain America: Super Soldier** 4
NEXT LEVEL GAMES
Beguilingly awful, from the poor graphics to the will-sapping combat and platforming.
- Army of Two: The 40th Day** 7
EA MONTREAL
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the original *Army of Two*.
- Avatar** 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother.
- RECOMMENDED Bayonetta** 9
PLATINUM GAMES
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.
- Bionic Commando** 7
GRIN
There are some great moments but they're few and far between.
- The Bourne Conspiracy** 7
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
Great presentation and vibe, samey action. Stylish but superficial.
- The Club** 8
BIZARRE CREATIONS
Original, compulsive and fun.
- Damnation** 3
BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT
Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.
- Dark Void** 6
AIRTIGHT GAMES
Unimpressive graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.
- Genji: Days of the Blade**
GAME REPUBLIC
Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.
- RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game**
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE
Robust, charming and impeccably presented.
- Hunted: The Demon's Forge** 7
INXILE
A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.
- NEW Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters**
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
A *God of War* clone that betrays its canon.
- John Woo Presents: Stranglehold** 7
MIDWAY CHICAGO
Packs frantic *Max Payne*-lite fun.



JUST CAUSE 2

DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
"Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. This insane action game is dirt cheap as it's now part of the Platinum range."

Kane & Lynch: Dead Men 6
IO INTERACTIVE
A let down. Gets close to greatness before crashing back down.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days 7
IO INTERACTIVE
Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

Lost Planet 2 7
CAPCOM
Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer buffs may dig it.

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Weak in many areas but has fun in spades. *The Saboteur* does it better, though.

Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight 3
NAMCO BANDAI
A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 8
TEAM NINJA
A treasure trove of violent gaming goodness.

5 RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2
TEAM NINJA
A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's been cut.

RECOMMENDED Prototype 9
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
A simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload of guilty fun.

Red Faction: Armageddon 7
VOLITION, INC.
Brown, corridor-based action. Snore.

RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla 6
VOLITION, INC.
The best destruction effects ever, hands down.

Saints Row 2 9
VOLITION, INC.
Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care.

RECOMMENDED SOCOM: Special Forces 8
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Great online with Move and a Sharp Shooter, though solo ain't that special.

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation 6
SLANT SIX GAMES
A sturdy effort that fails to excite.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm 6
NAMCO BANDAI
Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 8
RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

NEW Transformers: Dark of the Moon 5
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
A near brainless movie tie-in with little merit.

Transformers: War for Cybertron 7
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
Good multiplayer, and that's about it.

RECOMMENDED Vanquish 8
PLATINUM GAMES
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

Wanted: Weapons of Fate 5
GRIN
Designed only to appeal to mentally-subnormal 11-year-olds.

RECOMMENDED Warhawk 9
INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCES SANTA MONICA STUDIO
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night.

WET 8
A2M
Tonnes of grindhouse style, little substance.

Wheelman 6
MIDWAY STUDIOS - NEWCASTLE / TIGON STUDIOS
Rubbish low-speed handling and underdone throughout.

8 X-Men Origins: Wolverine 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
A head slicin' chest beater of a slash 'em up.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes 7
FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.

Alice: Madness Returns 7
SPICY HORSE
Marries great ideas and concepts with average to awful platforming.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A landmark, though slightly dated now.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed II 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
The pinnacle of the series so far and the multiplayer is outstanding.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum 8
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever. Best superhero game full stop.

RECOMMENDED Brutal Legend 9
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS
Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God. Cheap, too.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 9
MERCURY TEAM
Easily one of the best games of 2010.

Clash of the Titans 4
GAME REPUBLIC
A piss-poor action game lacking in every way.

RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno 8
VISCERAL GAMES
Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders 8
VIGIL GAMES
It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 9
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2 9
VISCERAL GAMES
What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

Demon's Souls 7
FROM SOFTWARE
Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved 8
NINJA THEORY
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey* was.

Fairytale Fights 7
PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY
Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic.

Folklore 8
GAME REPUBLIC
Original and surprising with moments of genius.

The Godfather: The Don's Edition 6
EA REDWOOD SHORES
It made for a decent PS2 game but skip this port. It's not worth it.

A bottle of rum

Pirates of the Caribbean? More like pirates of the has-been. The majority of pirate activities on the seas occurs just off the coast of Somalia. In the first half of 2011, Somali pirates were responsible for 163 out of 266 attacks that happened globally. In 2010 Somali pirates captured a record 1,181 hostages in exchange for ransom, and amounts usually hit millions of dollars.



Well what do you N2O?

Nitrous oxide has a diverse amount of applications, from being used in dentistry to being pumped through a motor to make cars go faster. The basic science behind the gas being used in cars is that it's stored as a liquid, and then when it escapes the pressurised container it cools down significantly. Colder air is denser, allowing more fuel and oxygen to burn, which provides more power to the drive wheels.



The Godfather II 6
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Starts as a decent crime caper but alienates fans of the film. Play *Mafia II* instead.

ESSENTIAL *God of War III* 10
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.

RECOMMENDED *God of War Collection* 9
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES
Age has not diminished its impact. Purchase immediately.

Golden Axe: Beast Rider 4
SECRET LEVEL
Destined for the chopping block. No co-op? Boo!

ESSENTIAL *Grand Theft Auto IV* 10
ROCKSTAR NORTH
The technical scope and scale of *GTA IV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.

ESSENTIAL *Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City* 9
ROCKSTAR NORTH
Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and a vast array of new weapons and vehicles. Explosive shotgun? Yes please.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince 6
EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO
Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Heavenly Sword 9
NINJA THEORY
Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short though.

RECOMMENDED *inFAMOUS* 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A superpowered take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox. Get this and the sequel.

inFAMOUS 2 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
Bigger and better, and the level editor is solid.

LEGO Batman 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Sound and faithful, but the formula is getting a bit old.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
The most thorough LEGO universe yet.

RECOMMENDED *LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures* 9
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Happiness and wonder overcame us with this joyous adaptation.

LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
You should know from the title if you'd like this or not. It is what it is, and it's okay.

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars 8
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Bum subject, excellent lightsaber action. Kids should adore it.

Lost: Via Domus 6
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 7
GAME REPUBLIC
A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned. If you can find it cheap grab it for a rainy day.

Mafia II 8
2K CZECH
Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

ESSENTIAL *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots* 10
KIJIMA PRODUCTIONS
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane. A titan amongst games. Epic.

Overlord II 8
TRIUMPH STUDIOS
Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End 6
EUROCOM
Looks the part but unfortunately it doesn't feel or play the part.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Worth your time but better swordplay could've really helped.

RECOMMENDED *Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time* 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED *Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction* 8
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION 10
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1-16
"A sweeping epic that's among the best games we've ever played. We're not lying when we say it's better than *GTA IV* in a lot of crucial areas. Also, the zombie-themed *Undead Nightmare* DLC is boss."

RECOMMENDED *Resident Evil 5* 9
CAPCOM
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED *The Saboteur* 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

SAW II: Flesh & Blood 6
ZOMBIE INC.
Lacks finesse but boasts some decent puzzles.

Shadows of the Damned 7
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay.

Silent Hill Homecoming 6
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

Sonic the Hedgehog 4
SONIC TEAM
There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blu-ray case.

Sonic Unleashed 6
SONIC TEAM
Hey! It's the least awful Sonic game in years!

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions 5
BEENOX
Looks great – but why have we gone back to swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows 7
TREYARCH / SHABA GAMES
Swift and tidy but not exactly deep.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed 7
LUCASARTS
Fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II 6
LUCASARTS
Gets a point-and-a-bit for hour that it is long. Technically superior but still rough.

RECOMMENDED *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent* 9
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

Toy Story 3 7
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE
Cute, simple, and charming as hell.

ESSENTIAL *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* 10
NAUGHTY DOG
Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

ESSENTIAL *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* 10
NAUGHTY DOG
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

Viking: Battle for Asgard 7
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
Slow attacks and weak visuals but it has its appeal.

RECOMMENDED *Yakuza 4* 8
CSI TEAM
One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

ADVENTURE

RECOMMENDED *Heavy Rain* 8
QUANTIC DREAM
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.

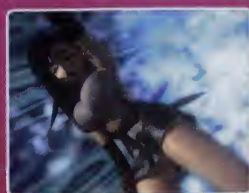


L.A. NOIRE 10
DEVELOPER: TEAM BONDI
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1
"The game world itself is the most detailed we've ever seen. If Team Bondi's Los Angeles was a skirt she'd be a blonde. A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window. The patient mix of slow-paced adventure gaming and well-executed open world action is hugely satisfying."

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust 1
TEAM17 SOFTWARE
An amazing new low for this generation.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation®Store



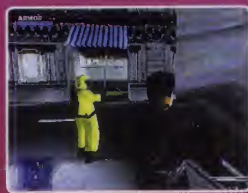
FINAL FANTASY VII
DEVELOPER: SQUARE
PLAYERS: 1
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



DRIVER
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through 3D cities may old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PLAYERS: 1
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, *this* is the zenith.



SYPHON FILTER
DEVELOPER: EIDETIC
PLAYERS: 1
If you still think *Syphon Filter* was a MGS rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



MEDIEVIL
DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO CAMBRIDGE
PLAYERS: 1
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *Medievil* still does it better than most since.



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

Obsidian Entertainment

LOCATION: SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA, USA FOUNDED: 2003
 BEST KNOWN FOR: FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

Feargus Urquhart is the tip of the spear at Obsidian, another studio that's comfortably coding RPGs and aiming high. Urquhart founded the studio out of the ashes of developer and publisher Black Isle Studios, which was part of Interplay. As an aside, that parent company created the *Fallout* franchise and, although Interplay is back up and running, the rights to that series have been sold to Bethesda.

When some of the core staff were working at Black Isle their speciality was RPGs and it's a genre they're sticking with – though Urquhart acknowledges there isn't just one type of RPG.

"I got to make a bunch of different types of games, as other people at Obsidian did, earlier in my career and I found that making RPGs is what I love to do," he says. "I also think that the RPG genre has such a range that there are always new things to do within it, from [shooters] like *Fallout*, to JPRGs like *Final Fantasy*, the more action RPGs like *Dungeon Siege* and, of course, the epic story-based RPGs like *Mass Effect*. Each one of them is an RPG, but they are also very different from one another – which means you get to be creative in entirely different ways when making them."

Obsidian should know. Its heritage is forged in RPGs that the PC crowd revere; the original *Fallout* games, *Icewind Dale*, and *Neverwinter Nights II*. However, its first title as Obsidian, *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II* on Xbox cemented its position in the gaming landscape. All of its games reflect the studio's desire to produce something that gives gamers the chance to enjoy something that has great depth of experience. However, Urquhart feels it can backfire for the studio as well.

"We try to do so much in the time we are given, we have been known to ship games that have had some glitches and bugs in them. It's tough though, when you have the opportunity to make sequels to such great games as... *Fallout 3*, but need to do it in much shorter time frames than the original development teams had... you want to make them as big or bigger than the original products. I think we did a better job of controlling ourselves and made *Dungeon Siege III* a very polished game within the time and budget we were given."

FIGHTING

Battle Fantasia 7
 ARC SYSTEM WORKS
 A nice curiosity but, seriously, get *Super Street Fighter IV*.

RECOMMENDED BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 9
 ARC SYSTEM WORKS
 Still wilder, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3.

FaceBreaker 7
 EA CANADA
 Great look but very unbalanced.

The Fight: Lights Out 5
 COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE
 The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo.

The King of Fighters XII 3
 SNK PLAYMORE
 Grey, old and well beyond retirement. Irredeemable..

RECOMMENDED Marvel vs. Capcom 3 8
 CAPCOM
 Fast, fun and gorgeous. Features Haggard.

RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat 8
 NETHERREALM
 Technically not available in Aus, it's a sterling return to form for the series. Funny, too.

RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV 8
 NAMCO BANDAI
 Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 10
 DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/DIMPS
 PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2
 "With the 'vanilla' versions vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay – but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price – *Super Street Fighter IV* belongs in everyone's collection."

NEW Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition 8
 CAPCOM
 For first time purchasers only.

RECOMMENDED Tekken 6 8
 NAMCO BANDAI
 Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though.

TNA Impact! 6
 MIDWAY STUDIOS – LOS ANGELES
 Arcade-style biff but needs more content.

WWE Legends of WrestleMania 6
 YUKE'S
 Gets by on retro charm but feels absolutely ancient.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 8
 YUKE'S
 If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

FLIGHT

Apache: Air Assault 7
 GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
 Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII 7
 UBISOFT ROMANIA
 A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun.

Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII 6
 UBISOFT ROMANIA
 Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.

Heroes Over Europe 7
 TRANSMISSION GAMES
 A little rough but not bad. *IL-2* is much better, though.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY 8
 DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
 PUBLISHER: AFA PLAYERS: 1-16
 "Head turning visuals, astonishing attention to detail, brilliant sound effects and stacks of ratta-tat action all combine in this truly surprisingly awesome aerial combat game. To be honest it's the best flight game we've ever played."

Lair 5
 FACTOR 5
 It feels rushed and unfinished. Deeply disappointing.

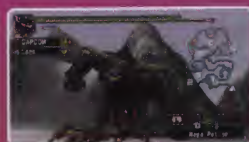
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 7
 UBISOFT ROMANIA
 Tight and accessible but a bit sterile.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 8
 UBISOFT ROMANIA
 A top gun successor. More detail, better mission design.

THE BEST PSP GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES
 DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS
 PLAYERS: 1-6
 This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. No, we're totally serious.



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE
 DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
 PLAYERS: 1-4
Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates.



WIPEOUT PULSE
 DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL
 PLAYERS: 1-8
 Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER
 DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
 PLAYERS: 1-8
 A proper, well-produced and thought-out *Metal Gear*, this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA
 DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
 PLAYERS: 1
 Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

MUSIC

- AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack** 7
HARMONIX
Bare-bones stuff but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.
- Band Hero** 7
NEVERSOFT
Robust but the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.
- RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band** 9
HARMONIX
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.
- RECOMMENDED DJ Hero** 9
FREESTYLEGAMES
Tough to write off as a gimmick.
- RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2** 9
FREESTYLEGAMES
Some great improvements and some excellent, unique mixes.
- RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band** 8
HARMONIX
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.
- Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock** 9
NEVERSOFT
The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.
- Guitar Hero World Tour** 9
NEVERSOFT
Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.
- Guitar Hero 5** 7
NEVERSOFT
Improving, but the hipster tracklist is a dud.
- RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica** 8
NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.
- Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits** 7
BEENOX
Great past *GH* tracks with full band support. Seriously though, why wasn't it just DLC?
- Guitar Hero: Van Halen** 6
UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it as a free bonus.
- Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock** 7
NEVERSOFT
Functional, but it just isn't evolving at the same rate as its peers.
- LEGO Rock Band** 8
HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.
- Michael Jackson The Experience** 5
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Better with mates but feels cheap.
- ESSENTIAL Rock Band** 10
HARMONIX
The best party game ever, until the sequels.
- ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2** 10
HARMONIX
The best music game series around.
- RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3** 9
HARMONIX
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.
- SingStar** 8
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.
- PARTY**
- NEW Ape Escape** 4
JAPAN STUDIO
A serious misstep. An on-rails shooter where the monkeys run towards you? Pass.
- EyePet** 7
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.
- Hail to the Chimp** 3
WIDELOAD GAMES
Want to lose friends? Play this with them.

- Kung Fu Rider** 3
JAPAN STUDIO
Waggle-based rubbish. A terrible example of a Move game.
- PlayStation Move Heroes** 7
NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

- The Shoot** 6
COHORT STUDIOS
A good Move rail shooter. Cool presentation. It won't blow your skirt up forever, though.

- RECOMMENDED Sports Champions** 8
ZINDAGI GAMES
Despite a few quirks this is the must-have Move title.

- Yoostar 2** 7
BLITZ GAME STUDIOS
Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

- RECOMMENDED de Blob 2** 9
BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems

- RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever** 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Joyfulness, digitally realised. Infectious.

- RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet 2** 9
MEDIA MOLECULE
Like the original it's innovative and never-ending. Improves upon an amazing product.

- RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection** 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

RACING

- Blur** 7
BIZARRE CREATIONS
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

- RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise** 9
CRITERION GAMES
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

- NEW Cars 2** 7
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE
Kids will love this solid kart racer.

- Colin McRae: DiRT** 9
CODEMASTERS
Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.

- Colin McRae: DiRT 2** 7
CODEMASTERS
Drives fine but it's style over substance here.

- RECOMMENDED DiRT 3** 8
CODEMASTERS
A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound. The gymkhana events are a highlight.



- GRAN TURISMO 5** 9
DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL
PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16
"GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

- Fuel** 4
ASOBO STUDIOS
Huge, but bugged, boring and undercooked.

Exo-lent



Metal Gear Solid's Gray Fox along with Alcatraz from *Crysis 2* have each worn an exoskeleton: an outer layer of metal that enhances their natural abilities to run faster, withstand more damage or sport a radical red eye. General Electric made one of the earliest exoskeletons in the 1960s. Called the Hardiman, it allowed a person to lift 680kg, though the suit itself weighed just as much. It was not a success.

- RECOMMENDED F1 2010** 9
CODEMASTERS
A white-knuckle racer and an authentic title. Heaps better with a Logitech wheel.

- Midnight Club: Los Angeles** 7
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
Visually weak, but sprawling and busy locale.

- RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers** 9
UNITED FRONT GAMES
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing.

- MotoGP 10/11** 6
MONUMENTAL GAMES
Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it.

- MotorStorm** 10
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Fast, hard and dirty. Things have come on a lot since 2007 though.

- MotorStorm: Pacific Rift** 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Boasts splitscreen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

- MotorStorm Apocalypse** 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
The new locale lacks a little charm but the racing is as fast and frantic as ever.

- MX vs. ATV Alive** 5
RAINBOW STUDIOS
A step backwards for a series that peaked on PS2 and has gotten lamer since.

- RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit** 9
CRITERION GAMES
Smooth, compelling and absolutely beautiful arcade racing.

- Nail'd** 7
TECHLAND
Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer that needed a bit more dev time.

- RECOMMENDED SHIFT 2: Unleashed** 9
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
Incredible sense of speed, frantic racing and plenty of depth. Tops even *GTS* in many crucial areas. Features Mount Panorama.

- RECOMMENDED Pure** 9
BLACK ROCK STUDIOS
One of the best arcade racers on the market.

- RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID** 9
CODEMASTERS
A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good but lacks the *Race Driver* vintage, despite the name.

- SBK 2011** 7
MILESTONE
Fairly similar to the last one, but with a new Challenge mode and tweaked handling.

- SEGA Rally** 7
SEGA RACING STUDIO
Familiar, old-school arcade fun, though it feels tired in 2011.

- RECOMMENDED Split/Second** 8
BLACK ROCK STUDIO
Doesn't feel as sharp as *Burnout* but it's a true challenger.

- SuperCar Challenge** 7
EUTECHNYX
Admirable effort but feels a little bland.

- Superstars V8: Next Challenge** 7
MILESTONE
An improvement but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

- Test Drive Unlimited 2** 7
EDEN GAMES
Massive and ambitious but the cars handle like go-karts in glue. Second-rate visuals, too. Playable but disappointing.

- RECOMMENDED WRC** 8
MILESTONE
Drab graphics, imperfect sound, but a joyfully robust driving model.

RPG/ACTION RPG

- Alpha Protocol** 5
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

- Ar tonelico Qoga: Knell of Ar Ciel** 7
GUST
Defiantly old-school JRPG. One for the fans.

- Cross Edge** 3
COMPILE HEART
Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.

- DC Universe Online** 7
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
Pretty but shallow, and expensive subs too.

- NEW Dungeon Siege III** 6
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Sluggish combat and an arse-backwards upgrade system. Quite pretty, though.

- RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins** 9
BIOWARE
As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

- RECOMMENDED Dragon Age II** 8
BIOWARE
Accessible but lacks immersion. One step forward and two steps back from *Origins*.

- ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion** 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
Simply put: awesome.

- Hyperdimension Neptunia** 8
IDEA FACTORY
A pastiche on modern videogames. Very, very weird JRPG with neat attack strategies.

- ESSENTIAL Fallout 3** 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
It's *Oblivion* in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, and it's utterly brilliant.

- RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas** 8
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
A great ride but you've been on it before.

- RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII** 8
SQUARE ENIX
Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action but missing a little magic.

- Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2** 7
VICARIOUS VISIONS
A compelling romp but the button-mashing play needs updating.

- ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2** 10
BIOWARE
Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi. An action RPG without peer.

- Resonance of Fate** 6
TRI-ACE
Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly.

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel
ASCARON ENTERTAINMENT
Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

Valkyria Chronicles
SEGA WOW
Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

White Knight Chronicles II
LEVEL 5/JAPAN STUDIO
A JRPG for those who like to grind.

SHOOTER

RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever. Beyond brutal.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A top-tier shooter with a deeply dedicated online community, but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED BioShock
IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN
Grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2
2K MARIN / DIGITAL EXTREMES / 2K AUSTRALIA
Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spiced to near-perfection.

BlackSite: Area 51
MIDWAY STUDIOS - AUSTIN
A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab.



BORDERLANDS
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4
"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better. It takes the best elements from RPGs and fuses them to a superb shooter. The result: the most rewarding co-op to date, and there's a stack of great DLC for it too. Great value."

RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made, and certainly the most realistic.

Brink
SPLASH DAMAGE
Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a solo experience.

Bulletstorm
PEOPLE CAN FLY
Inventive but saves the best stuff for the final couple of hours. Graphically struggles, too.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare
INFINITY WARD
It's still relentlessly exciting.

ESSENTIAL Modern Warfare 2
INFINITY WARD
Like three games stuffed into one. We still love the co-op Spec Ops mode.

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops
TREYARCH
A generous package with great solo and online play. The presentation's excellent too.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War
TREYARCH
A class act. War at its worst (and best). Proof you can make a great WWII game set (partially) in the Pacific. Plus, Nazi Zombies.

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood
TECHLAND
A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter that's better than you probably think.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena
STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS
Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

Condemned 2: Bloodshot
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

RECOMMENDED Crysis 2
CRYTEK
Diabolically pretty and challenging. A welcome reprieve from the glut of corridor shooters that demands intelligence and grit.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
Stunning, original and gory as hell. Hopefully the sequel rocks this hard.

F.E.A.R.
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS / DAY 1 STUDIOS
A chilling ride, but the graphics could've been sharper.

F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

NEW F.E.A.R. 3
DAY 1 STUDIOS
Capable but unspectacular. Also, not scary.

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

Haze
FREE RADICAL DESIGN
Patchy visuals, tragic level design and dismal AI.

RECOMMENDED Homefront
KAOS STUDIOS
Polished but blink-and-you'll-miss-it single player. A fine alternative to CoD multi, though.

ESSENTIAL Killzone 2
GUERRILLA GAMES
Lives up to the hype. Amazing graphics, hectic action.

RECOMMENDED Killzone 3
GUERRILLA GAMES
Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline. It's also a winner with Move.

Legendary
SPARK UNLIMITED
A rushed mess. Terrible.

RECOMMENDED MAG
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Shooter junkies take heed: this is where it's at for online combat.

RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor
DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising
CODEMASTERS
Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving.

RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint: Red River
CODEMASTERS
A massive improvement on its predecessor. Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box
EA UK / VALVE
Get it for Portal, keep it for Half-Life 2.

RECOMMENDED Portal 2
VALVE
One of the most brilliant games ever.

Quantum of Solace
TREYARCH
Has too many faults to be compelling.

RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A fantastic launch title with sweet weapons.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 2
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Fast, furious and stuffed with action.

Rogue Warrior
ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short and too terrible.

Singularity
RAVEN SOFTWARE
Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

Sniper: Ghost Warrior
CITY INTERACTIVE
The novelty will be enough for sniper fans. Regular FPS folk won't be able to forgive its sloppy execution.

TimeShift
SABER INTERACTIVE
A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Slick, good-looking and utterly engaging.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Not as good or as cool as the first one.

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty
SPARK UNLIMITED
Scrappy throughout. Great concept, bogus execution.

SPORTS

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa
EA CANADA
FIFA 10 with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey.

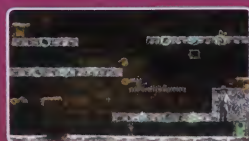
AFL Live
BIG ANT
Does a decent job of things and it's better than Rugby League Live.

The secret ingredient

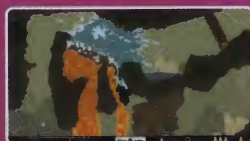
George A. Romero popularised the myth of the modern zombie in his 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead*, though zombies had been written into novels way back in 1929. While the bulk of what writers and directors base their zombie creations on comes from Haitian lore, the West African religion of Vodou also mention zombies. From our research, feeding a zombie salt sends them back to their grave. FYI.



THE BEST PSN GAMES ON PlayStation®Store



BRAID
DEVELOPER: HOTHREAD
PLAYERS: 1
A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man.



PIXELJUNK SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: Q-GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
Take control of a tiny ship and navigate your way through various caverns, rescuing any survivors along the way. Of course, there's interesting gameplay mechanics thrown into the mix, such as fluid water and lava dynamics that need to be used to solve puzzles.



FLIGHT CONTROL HD
DEVELOPER: FIREMINT
PLAYERS: 1-4
Possibly the most addictive and accessible PSN title available. The premise is simply to guide the aircraft on-screen to their respective runways. That's it – but you'll be totally hooked. One of the best games to play with PlayStation Move too.



PAC-MAN CE DX
DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
More than an update, this is a revolution. The 'CE' stands for 'Championship Edition', and is a mash of different maps and modes revolving around guiding Paccers through the dots and waiting ghosts. This is begging to be your new addiction.



PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES
DEVELOPER: POPCAP GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
The smash hit on PC lands on PSN, and this tower defense title plays beautifully with a controller. You have a variety of plants to defend your end of the lawn while the undead shuffle and eat their way across. Extremely addictive and actually loaded with braaains.

The French connection

William Grover-Williams was a racecar driver and, amazingly, a spy for Allied forces during World War II. In his early 20s, in the 1920s, he raced an Indian brand motorcycle before progressing to Grand Prix and the Monte Carlo rally, and was also the chauffeur for an Irish portrait painter, William Orpen, and his lover Yvonne Aupicq, in France. After Orpen and Aupicq split, Grover-Williams married Aupicq. A game should be made about this guy! Wait, it has: it's called *The Saboteur*.



Ashes Cricket 2009

TRANSMISSION GAMES
Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for some multiplayer beauty.

6

Backbreaker

NATURALMOTION
Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.

7

Beijing 2008

EUROCOM
Not the worst of its type but far from a game to buy and keep.

5

EA Sports MMA

EA TIBURON
Great controls but struggles to be convincing.

7



FIFA 11

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22
"While *FIFA 12* looms, *FIFA 11* remains a bafflingly brilliant update. If you've skipped the last few *FIFA* updates boost the score by one. Seriously, it's that good. This is the best-selling sports game in the world and it's not hard to see why."

9

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion

EA CANADA
Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

9

International Cricket 2010

TRICKSTAR GAMES
Not the most comprehensive cricket game but certainly the best when you're on the pitch.

7

John Daly's ProStroke Golf

GUSTO GAMES
Those looking for a high production value golf game should give this the shaft.

5

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K11

VISUAL CONCEPTS / KUSH GAMES
Hard court high priest Michael Jordan stars in perhaps the best basketball game ever.

8

RECOMMENDED NBA Jam

EA CANADA
A faithful and fun update to the '90s classic. He's on fire!

8

Pro Evolution Soccer 2011

KONAMI
Good for a goal fix, still second best overall. Get *FIFA 11*.

8

Rugby League Live

BIG ANT
Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate. The Melbourne crew at Big Ant did a slightly better job with *AFL Live*.

5

Shaun White Skateboarding

UBISOFT MONTREAL
Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating itself is pretty bland.

6

Shaun White Snowboarding

UBISOFT MONTREAL
Lacks the fine touch of realism or the excitement of lunacy.

6

Skate

EA BLACK BOX
A well-balanced masterpiece and true *Tony Hawk* killer. Trumped by its sequels.

9

RECOMMENDED Skate 2

EA BLACK BOX
One of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense and packed with natural lines and the balance is sublime.

9

RECOMMENDED Skate 3

EA BLACK BOX
Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as *Skate 2*.

8

RECOMMENDED Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12

EA TIBURON
Great golf game but we don't like the way the day one DLC is teased via the career mode.

8

Tony Hawk's Project 8

NEVERSOFT
No real reason to revisit this post-*Skate* at all.

7

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground

NEVERSOFT
Bloated and inconsistent. Pass.

6

Tony Hawk: RIDE

ROBOMODO
Pure frustration made plastic.

4

RECOMMENDED Top Spin 4

2K CZECH
More accessible than its predecessor with a DualShock, as the Move controls are spotty.

8

RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010

YUKE'S
The new undisputed baron of sports fighting.

8

Vancouver 2010

EUROCOM
A handful of events that last one afternoon.

6

RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4

SUMO DIGITAL
Superb Move controls and supremely pretty.

8

STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED Civilization Revolution

FIRAXIS GAMES
Great fun and shockingly addictive.

8

RECOMMENDED R.U.S.E.

EUGEN SYSTEMS
Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy. Better with Move, too.

8

The Sims 3

THE SIMS STUDIO
Waiting to pounce on the right type of gamer.

7

Stormrise

THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
A cack-handed, future war mess.

4

Tom Clancy's EndWar

UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Far from a finished product. Works, but it's hardly an essential purchase.

7

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

2004: FLATOUT

CONSOLE: PS2 GENRE: RACING DEVELOPER: BUGBEAR ENTERTAINMENT
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FINLAND CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$10 (EBAY)



FlatOut is a racer that could've just as easily been called Paddock Bashing Shenanigans, or possibly Fangin' Frank's Trip Through the Windshield. If either of those titles sound like the sort of fun game you can wrap your head around (in this case, a tree), then you're gonna love this.

The premise of *FlatOut* is simple: using a cavalcade of crappy rust buckets you must shunt and get sideways through rural tracks based in buttchuck nowhere. But while similarly styled games like *Burnout 3* are twitch-racers, *FlatOut* offers sim styled car handling. Also, each car is fitted with an actual driver (and no seatbelts). This makes for chaotically hilarious results, as meteorizing into a log pile, or copping a decent T-boning, will ejaculate your driver from his vehicle with a piteous wail.

This is of course where the magic kicks in. Ragdoll physics may be part and parcel of most any modern gaming title today, but back in 2004 watching your soon-to-be-a-corpse cartwheel down the hill, only to lodge in the wheel arch of a competitor, was mind-blowing stuff. This mayhem was enhanced by the fact that each of the 45 tracks was fully destructible. There's something to be said for being able to pull off the sort of short cut strategy that'd earn a high-five from the Blues Brothers.

Though the main course of *FlatOut* is a demolition racing championship, developer BugBear wisely recognised the appeal of its own seatbelt-less shenanigans. As a result you get access to a dedicated suite of six sadistic mini-games such as darts, bowling and high jump.

The latter is clearly the pick of the litter. You're given three attempts to run a car down a ramp and up another ramp. At this point holding the turbo button initiates a slow-mo 'release angle' meter before your driver is pitched over a 100ft ladder structure. It's a laugh-a-minute time-waster as anything but the most powerful jalopy doesn't have enough speed to get your guy over the ladder. More often than not he (or she) will get thoroughly coat-hangered or clipped into a furious tangle of limbs.

Thankfully, all of this brutality is geared towards a purpose. Money. Rather than having a fleet of stock-standard street racing machines, *FlatOut* has you studiously upgrading your piece-of-crap car with your ill-gotten moolah. A surprisingly large amount of components can be tweaked in *FlatOut* and the results of your hardearned flywheel, or supercharger, is always felt while racing in BugBear's physics-heavy engine.

Unfortunately, the latter racing events are also where *FlatOut* can come unstuck – and not always in a piss-funny way. Although we could never completely confirm it, there seems to be a dash of "catch-up logic" going on. For those of you unfamiliar with the term, it denotes a certain 'rubberbanding' between you and the competition. No matter how much you blitz ahead, one minor mistake is all it takes for your rivals to magically overtake you.

It's a frustration that only really rears its head in the final furlong of races. Even after all these years this is still worth a burl. It's also why BugBear's input is the sole reason we're looking forward to *Ridge Racer: Unbounded*.

RESTART RACE? YOU BETCHA

Money makes the world go 'round in *FlatOut*. Each race tier in the game requires a Bronze, Silver and Gold class car and the 'full outfit' prices for the best ride in each category is \$23,000, \$39,900 and \$79,400 respectively. When you weigh that against the fact that a won race only earns \$1000, *FlatOut* can be a bit of a grind.

Next month

EXCLUSIVE ►

Batman Arkham City

FIRST REVIEW!
The Dark Knight
rises before
descending
into hell!

PLUS

Dead Island

FIFA 12

Brothers in Arms:
Furious 4

F1 2011

Dark Souls

Mass Effect 3

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